

The Remnants Long Forgotten

Story: The Remnants Long Forgotten

Storylink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/2053565/1/>

Category: Golden Sun

Genre: Adventure/Drama

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Authorlink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/667964/>

Last updated: 11/19/2004

Words: 45383

Rating: K+

Status: In Progress

Content: Chapter 1 to 10 of 10 chapters

Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: Years have passed, as the third age ever looms across Weyard. Its history forgotten, yet always casting ripples upon the times, will never be forgotten again.

***Chapter 1*: Inescapable**

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Foreword:

Simple truths that at one time seemed to compose the very essence of our conceptions have the most peculiar way of turning out to be simply myth...

Chapter I

- Inescapable -

"The others urged Felix to cast the Mars Star into the heart of the lighthouse to once and for all break the seal holding the ancient power of alchemy. Once unleashed, the elemental dominion of earth, fire, water, and wind that had laid long dormant in all of Weyard, would awaken and bring about an age of great power enshrouded in a future of uncertainty."

"You know nothing of the consequences in which you are burdening yourselves with," spoke the Wise One in a tone of deadly conviction.

"All we know is that Gaia Falls is eroding and without the power of alchemy to nourish the world, Weyard will end up shriveling into nothing!" Isaac pleaded as the rest of the group nodded their heads in agreement. Picard the

Lemurian gallantly approached the Wise One and began to speak.

"My name is Picard and I come from..."

"I know who you are and where you come from," interrupted the Wise One.

"Then you must also know," Picard stated ignoring the Wise One's bluntness, "that Lemuria was once a great city of culture and vitality. There are even those still living in Lemuria who remember when there were several cities much like it scattered all across Weyard during times now long forgotten. Each one of those cities met a similar fate my home is experiencing right now. Wise One, the people of Lemuria have lost all their desire to live and prosper and have not even undertaken a great project since the construction of King Hydros's palace! The elements of fire, wind, earth, and water dwell in all that lives in Weyard and if you keep that life force sealed for too much longer, the people and all living things that coexist with the elements will die along with it. We have fought too long to let you stop us now."

"If the seal is broken, mankind will destroy itself much sooner than Gaia Falls ever could," the Wise One said dismally.

"No!" Kraden shouted. "We could combine our strengths to insure that mankind does not use the power of alchemy for evil!"

"It is inevitable. In time one man will seek to rule over all. It is human nature, *inescapable*. And it shall come sooner than any of you think."

"Why do you say that?" Kraden asked.

"Even as we speak", the Wise One inquired, "a young water adept is climbing Mt. Aleph's peak. His name is...Alex. Surely you know him."

"Alex? What would he be doing up there?" I asked.

"He understands far more than you do. He knows that once the four beacons are lit, their light will gather at the peak of Mt. Aleph and give birth to the golden sun."

"The golden sun?" Ivan asked suddenly feeling an unexplainable horror rise within his chest. "Isn't that the power of alchemy in its purest form?"

"Yes," answered the Wise One in a sullen voice. "The same golden sun which is formed when the Stone of the Sages takes shape. This has been Alex's one desire from the start."

"We've been duped!" Gareth cried in fury. "Alex has been using us this entire time!"

Mia seemed to be on the verge of tears. "I can't believe some one of my own tribe would engage in such a plot as this! We took an oath together swearing to prevent alchemy from being unleashed at all costs. But now he has betrayed his word, his tribe...and me as well." Her voice broke as she finished and her tears were only suppressed by the tension of the situation at hand.

"That dirty, lying, no-good blue haired jerk!" Gareth cursed to himself. Picard shot him a double take while Gareth simply shrugged

"None of this matters right now," Isaac said. "We are going to do what Alex wants only because the beacon *has* to be lit. The fate of Weyard depends on it."

"*Fools!*" the Wise One thundered. "You will bring about imminent destruction to all that lives!"

"We will fight to insure mankind's survival as Master Kraden has already informed you," Piers said coolly.

"If you are so deeply concerned with the misuse of alchemy," Felix questioned leveling his voice to a soft but serious tone, "why don't you deal with Alex yourself? It is he who seems to be the biggest threat right now, not us."

"I can not interfere with the actions of mankind," The Wise One simply stated.

"If that's the case," I remarked, "why don't you just let us pass so we can finish what we came here to do!"

"She has a point," Ivan addressed the guardian.

"I can not interfere with the actions of mankind," the Wise One repeated. "But what if some miracle were to occur that prevented you from igniting the beacon?"

"A miracle?" Sheba said nervously. "What kind of miracle?"

"The sky almost immediately turned black accompanied by several storm clouds forming overhead. The lightning and thunder came almost instantly followed by rain as cold as death itself. "

"A miracle that would most definitely change your mind, one way, *or another!*"

"The Wise One disappeared into thin air closely followed by a thunderous cry from within the clouds. A three-headed dragon then appeared and soared down to the Mars Lighthouse to attack us. As we prepared for battle, we all

heard a slight murmur from the scholar Kraden trying to echo something above the monstrous cries of the dragon. We made out a 'Wait', but it was too late for we had to fight the dragon now; we had to fight for our future and most importantly we had to fight for Weyard.

"It took all eight of us to slay each individual head of the dragon, only becoming more powerful as it lost more heads. Mia and I were busy healing the party, while Felix, Isaac, Picard and Garet bravely labored in engaging the dragon. Sheba and Ivan used their psynergy from a distance to barrage the enemy with distracting blows so that the men could make their attacks while the dragon's guard was down. After about an hour or so, we finally slew all three heads and to our surprise, each head became to take the form.....the form of.....a dead dragon's head. I guess it wasn't that much of a surprise after all."

Jenna suddenly remembered the scourge of pain she had felt when she discovered the true forms of the heads. The children didn't need to know that part of the story. They would be content that their father and Uncle Felix had slain a powerful dragon.

"Then what happened?" asked Adrian and Michael together within their climax of excitement.

"Well," Jenna contemplated for a second, "your Uncle Felix cast the Mars Star into the lighthouse and let loose alchemy upon the world...and...everyone has been trying their best to live happily ever after since."

The children's doors slid opened and Isaac entered drenched in rainwater. Jenna gasped and began to lecture him about the dangers of being out in the rain too long, periodically

turning her head to the children for they had been guilty of their father's blunder on countless occasions.

"Father! You're home!" Michael greeted jubilantly. "Tell us the story of how you became the victor of Colosso!"

"But before you do," Adrian joined in, "tell us of your journey across the Karagol Sea!"

"Not tonight children" Isaac said. "Besides, your mother has probably already told the entire history of Weyard while I was gone. Let's save those stories for another night. Goodnight young warriors."

"Good night Father," Michael yawned.

"Sleep well children," Jenna said kissing the both of them.

"Good night Mother. I'm glad you're back Father," said Adrian.

"Me too," Isaac said as he and Jenna left the room and closed the door behind them. Adrian and Michael could already hear them talking before they even approached the stairs.

"You know," said Michael, "that's not how the story really ends."

"How do you know?" Adrian asked not being able to grasp the thought that Mother had not told them the real story.

"Naomi told me," Michael said with a hint of pride shining in his eyes.

Naomi was a young wind adept from the town of Contigo who Adrian and Michael had met while visiting one of their parent's friends. The two boys had grown fond of the young

girl for her striking beauty and her spirit for adventure. The three had many a times tried to steal a boat and retreat into the Great Western Sea, but time after time were caught and returned to their parents.

The most pronounced feature about Naomi was her mysteriously advanced adept abilities. Ever since the lighthouses were lit, adepts all around Weyard found themselves learning at an accelerated pace but the speed of her development was unheard of. Even though she was only ten years of age, Naomi could already manipulate the wind to her command, often lifting bullies off their feet and throwing them into a pond or a stream. The town elders grew wary of this almost right away and quickly informed her parents that their daughter was becoming a hazard to other children.

"What did Naomi tell you?" Adrian asked pleadingly.

"She told me that those three head's were actually Grandma, Grandpa and Grandpa Kyle."

It couldn't be, Adrian thought to himself. *How could his grandparents ever be a dragon?* His head was spinning and he soon found himself very tired. Questions were whirling in his mind about how his grandparents could possibly turn out to be the final opposition to his father and Uncle Felix's quest.

"Bet you didn't know that did you Adrian?" Michael taunted.

Adrian closed his eyes and he let his mind clear so he would be fully refreshed for the next day's activities. They were going to Uncle Felix's tomorrow so Adrian decided not to press the matter further.

"Good night Michael."

Isaac was urged by Jenna to put some dry clothes on immediately. So, after Isaac put on a night robe and his slippers he headed toward the wooden table in the center of their house where Jenna was anxiously waiting for him.

"Alright Isaac, after three weeks I think I deserve to know where exactly you've been," Jenna asked in a tone which meant that she wanted a good answer. He had grown to know this tone quite well over the years.

"Suhalla," he answered with convincing truth of which Jenna had also gotten to know over the years; and love.

"Well?" whispered Jenna dreading her husband's next words.

"Sheba's predictions were correct," Isaac answered her. "The elemental influence of the Venus Lighthouse has indeed expanded and reached, if not surpassed Suhalla. *Every* single child under six is an earth adept."

"That can't be," Jenna gasped. "It was just last year when Sheba told us that all of Lalivero's adolescents under six were showing signs of full-fledged adept capabilities. Suhalla is at least a two-day journey by foot from Lalivero! The Venus Lighthouse's sphere of influence couldn't possibly be expanding that fast," Jenna said hesitating. "Could it Isaac?"

"Alchemy is an ancient practice with many unknown properties that defy some things we know to be certain," Isaac said. "It would not surprise me if this were so."

Jenna smiled at the familiar quote. "You've been reading Kraden's book, haven't you?"

"Hardly," Isaac said suppressing a chuckle. "Those just happened to be the opening words of the prologue."

"Still," Jenna remarked, "Kraden will be most pleased to find out that you've finally started. He's been hounding you to read it for years."

"Well for my sake let's hope amends can finally be made!" he said as they both laughed.

"Did you stop by to see him before you came home?" Jenna asked.

"Yes," he answered sullenly.

"How is he?"

"The same," Isaac replied. "He is still obsessed with his current project. He even told me that he stumbled upon a name for the study."

"A name?" Jenna said in surprise. "What was it?"

"He called it astronomy."

Jenna sighed. "And all that he does is look at the stars?"

"Yes," Isaac answered again. "He says that the heavens alone provide the proof he needs to prove his theories."

"Let's not talk about them," Jenna quickly said. "We have too much to talk about already."

"This is true," Isaac acknowledged. "We have a different matter at hand."

"The lighthouses," she reminded him.

"I assume," he began, "that the other three lighthouses' spheres of influence have been growing just as much, if not the exactly the same as Venus lighthouse. We will need to ask Ivan and Mia to confirm this, but if this is so, Contigo and Imil will have already experienced the newborn adept effect; them being considerably closer to the Jupiter and Mercury Lighthouses than Suhalla is to the Venus."

"What about Prox?" Jenna asked.

Isaac looked down at the table averting his eyes from her. "Their town is already mostly fire adepts and I fear for what powers their young will soon possess. The people of Prox are good people though, they should be able to resist power's beckoning...for now."

"We must tell Ivan and Mia immediately for these are the signs the Wise One forewarned us of!" Jenna said as she stood to her feet. "This is the true beginning of the reign of alchemy! It's only a matter of time before these adepts will try to manipulate the elements to do their bidding and seek to rule over all! We have to gather the other adepts and tell the people of Weyard of the danger that lies ahead!"

Jenna finished exasperated and obviously full of emotion.

"Yes, Jenna," Isaac agreed, surprised at the sudden outburst in which was sure to attract the attention of Adrian and Michael upstairs. "This is why we are meeting with your brother tomorrow. We will discuss our traveling plans there. But for now Jenna, it is late and you need your rest for the late hours seem to have dealt serious blows to your self-control. No more stories to the children this week, I'll take care of that. Now off to bed with you."

Apparently she hadn't understood his humor for Jenna's sense of urgency disappeared and Isaac noticed that she

was silently starting to fume.

"Good night Jenna," Isaac said trying to usher her off quickly before he received the close proximity of an imminent outburst. "I'll join you in a few minutes, but first I have to do something."

"Better get comfortable where you are, Isaac," she said wearing her highly polished malevolent smile as she edged away, "for that table is the closest thing you'll have for a bed tonight."

Jenna flipped her hair, turned her back to him, and closed the bedroom door behind her.

Okay, I guess she's got jokes too, Isaac thought. The children giggled upstairs through the railing and Isaac smirked at them. He urged them to bed and began to polish his sword.

***Chapter 2*: Plans of Departure**

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Chapter II

- Plans of Departure -

Adrian awoke to the sound of Grandma Dora's chickens squawking about the yard next door. After being woken up in the middle of the night by Michael to listen in to his parents conversation, Adrian was not as fully refreshed as he had hoped to be. He rolled to his left to see the other bed beside him empty, then all of a sudden he felt a sharp shove at his back and then an instant later he found himself flat on the floor. Michael had been recently making it a habit to experiment with his psynergy on Adrian, almost daily using his mind to push him off the bed when he wasn't looking. Adrian heard a barrel of laughter coming from behind the other side of the bed as Michael popped up almost in tears. Adrian thought about shouting at his brother, but then resisted after realizing that the fall hadn't hurt that much.

"Adrian, Michael, breakfast!" Jenna shouted from downstairs. Michael darted from the room closely followed by Adrian. Isaac was already at the table eating with a ravenous hunger probably caused by the lack of sleep from the previous night. The children saw blankets next to the fireplace on the floor, probably belonging to their father, and giggled nervously as they caught their father's gaze.

"Good morning Father!" the children cried in unison as their father gave them an exhausted smile and bid them good morning. Michael was fathoming whether or not he should ask Isaac how he slept last night, then thought the better of

it. Jenna handed the children eggs and toast while Isaac got up to get them some milk from the barn.

"Thank you Mother," the two said automatically after making a vow the previous night that they would not get on their mother's bad side this week in fear of being sent outside to sleep, or something along those lines. Jenna nodded and told them to be finished and ready to go before she returned from her room getting dressed. The children in turn nodded and began to eat their eggs vigorously, later stuffing their toast in their pockets so that they would have plenty of time to get ready and be back down before their mother came out.

"Where do you think Mother and Father will be going?" Michael asked Adrian as they headed up the stairs towards their room. "To Imil and Contigo perhaps? That's where Father said they would be able to confirm their suspicions about the lighthouses."

"Imil and Contigo are in totally opposite directions of New Vale," Adrian resolved, "and from the way Father makes it sound, time is an asset we are beginning to lose control of. The journey to Contigo alone is ten days by foot to Lalivero harbor, ten days by ship to the Atteka inlet, and two additional days to reach the village. Double that to get back to New Vale. Then take account of the journey to Imil which takes another ten days through the mountains and back, this all adds up to almost three months. By that time the lighthouses' sphere of influence will have already expanded considerably and we will only have merely attained confirmations of what's *really* happening!"

Adrian finished almost out of breath from what he thought to be a brilliant observation but lost any pride he had gained when he saw Michael wasn't paying any attention. Michael

turned his face to his brother after hearing the unbroken silence and immediately gave his counterstrike towards Adrian's genius.

"All they have to do Adrian, is split up and report back to New Vale with their findings," Michael said boringly.

"Oh no!" said Adrian aghast at his brother's ignorance. "Adepts must never travel the world alone without a party of at least one healer and one warrior. You know the stories of all the horrible monsters out there! Father could easily take on every one of them but if he was to get hurt, and he was alone, he'd be done for. Same with Mother, for she is mostly a healer, and not a fierce warrior. No matter how well she could heal herself against her enemies, eventually her psynergy would run out and she would no longer be able to resist; she'd be done for as well."

"This is almost true Adrian," retorted Michael, "but you fail to realize the ability of our parents. They are two of the eight adepts sworn to protect all of Weyard from the threats of alchemy. Each and every one of them, healer or warrior can fend for themselves. And if you didn't know already, earth adepts have some healing power . Father could take on Dullahan himself if he wanted too."

Adrian could hear an inkling of uncertainty in his brother's voice when he said those words. Naomi had told them numerous stories about the frightening power of the Anemos Sanctum guardian, Dullahan.

"Still," said Adrian attempting to keep at least some of the ground he had lost, "Mother would be vulnerable."

"Maybe," said Michael skeptically, but he knew that his mother was just as powerful an adept as his father was, but he also knew Father would never let Mother make any one of

those journeys by herself. Eventually, they dropped the subject and put on their traveling clothes and mounted their small swords upon their backs. They heard the front door open and assumed that Father had returned from the barn with their milk. The children rushed downstairs mere moments before their mother came out to see them both smiling and ready to go with a mouthful of fresh milk dripping down their chins.

"Everybody ready?" Jenna asked.

New Vale was a paradise when the spring season reconquered the winter's foothold of the earth. It seemed to Adrian that the world was an entirely different battlefield from what his parents made it out to be, the seasons constantly at warfare striving to show off their brilliance for all of Weyard to see; the spring always emerging most gloriously in its own designated time. Adrian once tried to describe this to his brother but immediately understood by Michael's far off glances that he could care less.

The two brothers were only twelve years of age, but according to their parents, their demeanors did not match their intelligence. Adrian was a dreamer, a master of his own mind. His mother had commented on numerous occasions of how Ivan of Contigo had told her that Adrian's mind worked like that of a wind adept, although he clearly had the elemental gifts of the earth. "It is a rare gift," Ivan would say, "to be the master of one's own mind and not the slave of its beckoning desire."

Still, Adrian had always had trouble developing his psynergy, unlike his brother who picked up new abilities all the time faster than Naomi could conjure up a whirlwind.

They were given lessons daily by their parents, but moving objects with their mind seemed to be all his parents were interested in teaching them. Michael had mastered this ability his first year of learning and had begun taking additional lessons from Uncle Felix on weekends. Adrian was fully able to move any given object with his mind at will, but he always found himself so absorbed in his task that he had no idea what was happening outside his efforts. This scared Adrian greatly and time after time again he would immediately cease his concentration to once again return to reality, in turn losing his elemental link with the target. He tried to explain this phenomenon to his parents, but they could not give him an explanation. They just told him that he would have to try harder. And so it came to be that Adrian hated learning the skills of an adept and therefore had trouble developing his abilities. Michael moved on and Adrian was left at home moving small rocks to and fro around the yard. Isaac and Jenna feared for their son's mysterious disability.

"I've sensed Adrian's mind at work," Jenna would tell Isaac. "Whatever he sets his mind to, he would always accomplish it. Why can't psynergy work the same way for him?"

Isaac never had a response to his wife's question. "He will see the Great Healer one day", he would always resolve with her, but this never came to pass.

The spring breeze blew sweetly on the party's faces as they followed the long road through New Vale to Felix's cabin. Adrian and Michael were happily munching their toast from breakfast as their parents walked ahead of them deep in conversation.

The town was made up of all the refugees of Vale who had been forced from their homes by the destruction of Mt.

Aleph. After the elemental activity near Vale had died down, the ex-residents gathered all the rubble from their village and began to rebuild a little south of where their old town used to be. The process promised to be difficult and costly. Not even the town elders could predict how long it would take to rebuild the town to minimal efficiency. The rubble had been so scattered and so damaged that the people of Vale had to resort to building stone huts to satisfy their habitual needs until further possibilities could be pursued. When all hope of making the town reflect some of Vale's original splendor seemed to disappear, the unthinkable happened. Craftsmen from Tolbi had made their way all the way from Gondowan to Angara bringing workers, supplies, and food. Master Hammet from Kalay came with horses, cattle, and chickens to lay the foundations for the resident's soon to be farm economy. The people of Xian in East Angara brought exotic flowers, fruits and vegetable to reinforce the contributions Kalay had made and shortly after some workers from Vault arrived, Colosso warriors from all over Weyard came to assist in the construction of *New Vale*. With the people's hope and spirits rekindled, they saw how no further benevolence could be possible, but then the dancers from the far eastern island of Izumo arrived to provide entertainment for the nightly feasts and festivities.

In twelve months time, New Vale was finally complete. The town reflected the genius of all the different towns that contributed to its construction and even somehow kept the aura of Vale's original style included. Irrigation systems were immediately made, farms were fully functional, and most importantly, homes were built that supplied shelter for all the families that had once been practically homeless. When the people of Tolbi, Izumo, Vault, Xian, and Kalay were about to depart, it was discovered that this great project had been organized by none other than Iodem of Tolbi. Iodem had come with his fellow Tolbians but had not said a word about

his hand in the project, not wanting to draw attention. The people of Weyard praised Tolbi for his humility and kindness and during the last few days before the Great Departure, a statue was constructed in the new town square honoring him as the leading founder of New Vale. On the statue would be carved every single person's name that helped contribute in those twelve months. It would be a monument that would be visited and revisited for the rest of time, but leaving its legacy instilled in the hearts of all for much, much longer. The elders of New Vale often referred to this time as a "Golden age in an era of darkness." The people of Weyard had united to accomplish a great project out of pure benevolence to assist a people in need. There were whispers among the adepts of Weyard that even though the danger of alchemy was looming ahead, there just maybe, would be a hope for humanity to conquer it.

There is a grand history here, Adrian thought as he walked with his family along the main road now passing through town square. *A history definitely worth fighting for and preserving for the future.* His father had said this countless times.

At that moment Adrian wanted to pull out his sword and challenge all the forces of evil that ever were at work attempting to forge chaos in a world trying so hard to maintain peace. He then better understood the great responsibility his parents had on their shoulders, them and the other six adepts whom were dedicating their lives for the sake of preventing war.

The gentle wind blew against Adrian's long black hair as he focused all around him on the exotic flowers and plants that decorated the garden of every home they passed. When homes could no longer be seen, wildflowers flooded into view covering all that the eye could see. Uncle Felix's cabin

was just over the next hill. As Jenna and Isaac disappeared ahead of them, Michael and Adrian remained on top turning around to see the town of New Vale as a whole.

Michael saw his brother's blue-eyed gaze and said, "It is pretty amazing, I guess."

Adrian turned to look at him but Michael was already running down the hill. He smiled and soon the demon of his inner-child could lay still no longer. Adrian ran down the hill as fast as he could, arms in the air half-expecting the wind to lift him off his feet.

Felix's cabin was located in a small valley between the hill Adrian and Michael had just crossed, and the same hill Felix had crossed thirteen years ago that allowed the viewer to see all of Vale, or in Felix's case, all that was left after the formation of the Stone of the Sages. He lived a quiet life, occasionally visiting his parents back in the heart of New Vale, but never staying for long. He was thirty-one years of age now and the years of inactivity had made him restless, but he did not let this interfere with his constant training. Felix had become an elemental master of the earth and quite often could be seen unearthing rocks the size of houses out from under his land that were interfering with his gardening. Felix had taken a fondness to gardening ever since he found out that it took a lot of time out of your day to maintain. So he made sure that he had numerous ivies, bushes, trees, and flowers of every sort imaginable to fill his never-ending void of time. By the time Adrian reached the bottom of the hill, Felix was already ushering Isaac and Jenna inside and waving to him and Michael.

"Well if it isn't my gallant squire and young scholar!" welcomed Felix as he lifted the two boys in the air with each hand.

"Uncle Felix!" the boys exclaimed.

"Can I play with your sword?" asked Michael hoping this time would be different.

"Is the djinn awake?" asked Adrian almost simultaneously, ultimately making both their questions just an inaudible conjunction of words, but Felix already expecting these questions was able to make them out.

"Like I've said before Michael, you wouldn't be able to wield that sword even if your life depended on it."

"But I could use my psynergy to help me lift it!" Michael pleaded. "I've been practicing with this big log at home! Please Uncle Felix, just give me one chance!"

"It requires immense concentration to lift a sword such as mine with psynergy yet alone *use* it at the same time. If you were to lose your concentration, which is inevitable at times, you could seriously injure yourself. Your parents would never approve, and besides, a weapon is not a play thing," Felix concluded.

Michael understood his request had been firmly denied so he went inside to join his parents.

"The djinn?" Adrian asked again.

"Unfortunately," sighed Felix "you just missed him. He woke up for a couple hours just yesterday but then went right back to sleep." Adrian was disappointed but he had learned

over the years not to let his setbacks interfere with his hopes for the future.

"Maybe next time then," said Adrian as he walked inside the cabin with Felix to meet the others.

Felix's cabin was small but he somehow managed to fill it with everything he needed. Old swords, armor, and shields covered the walls always left Michael drooling. Near the kitchen was Felix's old work desk which was always hidden under an endless sea of notes sufficiently occupying Adrian for hours. Adrian and Michael made their usual stop to Felix's room so they could gaze upon the treasures of his old quest. Michael made his way to the closet where Felix's sword resided in and slowly opened the double doors. There lay the *Sol Blade* on a golden altar a few feet inside. The blade was lined with untarnishable silver and the handle seemingly to Michael had the color of the sun itself, so brilliantly golden that he always had to turn away after looking at it too long. Adrian warned Michael to keep his wits about him and then made his way to the back of the room beside Felix's bed where a small creature slept silently on a large white pillow. The earth djinn's small protruding chest slowly moved up and down as Adrian watched it in fascination. Felix entered with his hands behind his back and sat beside him on the bed.

"I don't know what I'm going to do with that thing," Felix said staring at the snoring creature inquisitively. "Ever since the rest of the djinn left, all he ever does now is sleep. I can't even take him anywhere anymore. He's useless."

"Have you not yet figured out a reason why all the djinn left?" Adrian asked him.

"Not really," Felix shrugged. "All I know is that right before the Great Departure, they all got really antsy as if they were nervous about something. And when the time came for everyone to leave, they all just simply left right along with the crowd; except for this one."

"There must be more to these things Uncle Felix," Adrian said still disappointed about his missed encounter with the djinn's awakening. "And why have you had your hands behind your back this entire time?"

"Well, Adrian," Felix answered him pulling out his hands into open view, "it just so happens that I have something that might fulfill your curiosity. This is an excerpt from the book Kraden wrote concerning his research on alchemy. I want you to have it, it's about djinn."

Adrian beaming, took the parchment and read the title: ***The Elemental Djinn: A Modern History.***

"Thank you so much Uncle Felix! I will start reading right away!" Adrian exclaimed as his eyes immediately began to scan the paper.

"That's what I was hoping," Felix said. "Your parents and I have some very important matters to discuss and I will need your full cooperation in keeping yourself and your brother from eavesdropping."

Michael appeared from the closet and apparently had heard the beginning of the conversation. "But we already know what's going on Uncle Felix," he said. "We know that Mother and Father have to go to Imil and Contigo. What is there to keep from me and Adrian?"

"Yes, your father did tell me you overheard him and your mother last night when you two were supposed to be in

bed," Felix chuckled. "The plot may seem simple and concrete to you, but the details of our quest are most complex. You do not know what is implied with our duties and the reality of its danger. We keep many things from you for good reasons and we wish for this to remain. So I ask you two now, will you please stay in this room until we tell you otherwise? Can you do this?"

The two boys nodded in agreement.

"Oh, did I mention if we do catch you eavesdropping again, I will insist that your mother make you two sleep outside for an entire week," Felix joked in a deep gruff voice. "That is an appropriate punishment, no?"

The children screamed and attempted to tackle Felix so he could not relay this idea to their mother. After a couple minutes of fierce wrestling, Felix had managed to thwart his nephews' feeble efforts and then promised he wouldn't tell Jenna if they stayed true to their word. Felix then left the room laughing and closed the door behind him.

"I almost was able to lift him up off the ground that time!" said Michael out of breath and obviously fully out of psynergy. "Maybe if you would of *helped* me Adrian, we could of done it."

"You know I don't use psynergy very well," sighed Adrian as he laid down flat on the bed. "I wouldn't of been much help."

"What are you kidding?" Michael said giving his brother a puzzled look. "You can use psynergy just as well as I can if you wanted to."

"I've told you before Michael, when I use psynergy I can't see beyond what I'm doing. It scares me and it would scare you too."

"But I sometimes find myself absorbed using psynergy too," Michael said. "Uncle Felix calls it intense concentration. It's perfectly natural."

"I know what concentration is," said Adrian, "but this is much different. It's like every time I concentrate on an object, everything else goes blurry or even black altogether. It can't be natural Michael, does that ever happen to you?"

"No," Michael agreed after a long pause. "I guess not."

The two boy laid there on the bed for a while, thinking about what Felix had said about their quest having dangers that must be unsaid to them. They didn't like the sound of that at all, especially because their parents were most likely to embark on a mission headed right straight for those dangers.

"I have an idea," said Michael breaking the silence. "How about we read that excerpt from Kraden's book. I am kind of curious about djinn."

Adrian's face lighted up and he immediately fetched the parchment from his clothes. He unfolded the paper and began to read:

The Elemental Djinn: A Modern History

Ever since Isaac and Garet had told me that all the elemental djinn were released by the Wise One right before the Sol Sanctum was about to cave in, I had suspected that djinn had an unknown importance in the role of alchemy. Throughout my travels with Felix, Sheba, Jenna, and Picard, I remember that djinn could usually be found conveniently on slight detours near the paths of our quest. The djinn had powerful effects on the adepts and if a certain djinn was set to its corresponding adept, the effects would be most

dramatic. Isaac told me while he was on his quest with Gareth, Ivan, and Mia, that he had encountered similar creatures with similar effects. I now assume that the Wise One was responsible for the placement of these creatures. He knew that if Isaac agreed in undertaking the quest to protect the lighthouses, he would need the aid of the elemental djinn to buffer the strength of the fire adepts, Satauros and Menardi, who were in their opposition. This deduction then leads to the question of why Felix's party was able to obtain the djinn if they were also in opposition to Isaac's quest. I only have but one hypothesis.

The Wise One is the sworn protector of all Weyard and I am sure he knew that Gaia Falls was eroding . Following the dark ages of power and the near destruction of humanity, the Wise One knew that when he sealed away alchemy, in time, yes Weyard would erode away without the nourishment of the elements. But to him, the destruction of the world from the exterior was a much better fate than the destruction that would reign from within. But then he saw the first effects of his actions with Prox. He saw that the people there had little time before Gaia Falls would completely swallow the town and their homes. Shortly after Isaac's party had defeated Satauros and Menardi, but had failed to prevent them from igniting the beacon, the Wise One realized the passion and the sacrifice the two fire adepts had made in an effort to save their people, however malevolent their actions may have been along the way. The Wise One then knew he could interfere with the actions of mankind no more. The people of Prox were fighting for survival and Isaac's party were completely unaware. Humanity would have to understand themselves the state of their world and then decide what action to take. He then released the remaining elemental djinn and scattered them across the winding trails of Felix's quest to give him and his

party the power to play a hand in the conclusion of Weyard's epic destiny...

"Hmmm," Michael hummed interrupting Adrian from reading the next passage. "I never knew these research books could be this interesting."

"Usually they're not," commented Adrian. "But this one happens to be written by a scholar who happens to be named Kraden."

The boys giggled in agreement and continued reading with the utmost interest.

Felix, Isaac, and Jenna sat at the table for a long while just drinking tea and eating the dinner Felix had made them for their arrival. Felix knew why his sister and Isaac were here, he just wished that they would get to the point and discuss what they were going to do so he could get out of this cabin and back into the open world.

"We need to go to Imil and Contigo," Isaac finally said.

"This I know," replied Felix relieved that the silence had finally been broken.

"We came here to discuss how we are going to accomplish this," inquired Jenna as she turned her head to make sure Felix's door was closed all the way.

"Its a rather long journey to Contigo and back, almost a month in a half," said Felix.

"Yes, and two weeks to and from Imil," concluded Isaac.

"That adds up to almost three months if we all travel

together."

"That's too long," sighed Felix.

"If we split up Felix," Jenna stated in a matter-of-fact tone piercing enough to penetrate the hardest steel, "which I think you're implying, we would save four weeks, but we would also be jeopardizing the lone traveler's safety, which I know would be you!"

"I can fend for myself Jenna," Felix countered. "And I would be back from Imil in four weeks, if not quicker giving you two a piece of mind about the children."

This was true Jenna thought, for she had almost forgotten the other quest she had committed herself to twelve years ago.

"Oh no," she suddenly realized. "We can't leave the children alone for a month in a half!"

"We have our parents to watch them until Felix gets back," suggested Isaac.

"But we have never left them alone for this long before!" said Jenna beginning to panic.

Felix interrupted Jenna before she could worry any further.

"I will then take your ship to Atteka and you two will go to Imil and return to the children in four weeks time."

"You are *not* crossing the Great Western Sea by yourself Felix!" Jenna thundered with impressive conviction.

"Jenna...", Isaac began but was quieted by a firm hand signaling him to cease.

"We know that Alex is up to no good and Ivan and Gareth are the only ones relatively near that area to protect you if he is planning something." Jenna's rage then unusually subsided and her face showed signs of fear, doubt, and a deep passion Felix was used to seeing lately. "We do not underestimate your powers Felix, but to travel alone right now, is insane."

"I could pick up Gareth from Kimbobo and then head to Contigo," said Felix.

Isaac answered him this time. "You know just as well as I do that Gareth can't leave until his task is complete. Felix remembered Gareth volunteering to settle some intertribal boundary issues between the people of Kimbobo, Naribwe, and the new village of Pavakobo.

"Then we are back to square one," resolved Felix now starting to become frustrated. He hated to say what he was just about to say, but Jenna and Isaac needed to be reasoned with, so he began to speak his mind.

"When the Wise One asked the eight of us to serve as Weyard's principle adept guardians, we knew that if we accepted, we would hold the responsibility to moderate peace if conflict was ever to arise. The happenings of Venus Lighthouse, Lavilero and Suhalla are disturbing and we must confirm whether or not the newborn adept effect is identical near the other lighthouses. We swore an oath, an oath to protect Weyard from the dangers we ourselves brought into existence. It is our power alone that can enable peace or war and it is *this* expedition that will help us confirm whether or not the new age of adepts has arisen. The children have grown up knowing of your responsibility and you have raised them knowing that you would one day have to leave them.

Our mere three month absence will prepare them for what lies ahead."

They heard thunder rolling outside and immediately following, plummeting raindrops could be heard pounding against the cabin roof. Jenna seemed horror-stricken after truly hearing the harsh reality of their responsibility. She then knew that one day, Alex would show his evil face to the world and bring with him an army of destruction threatening to deliver carnage to all who resisted. She and her seven other companions would have to leave their homes and their families to fight him in an attempt to restore peace. This was their oath, this was their bond, and to Jenna as a mother, this was her burden.

"Then it is decided," Isaac firmly said. "Felix will go to Imil, and Jenna and I will go to..."

Isaac stopped mid-sentence and then it dawned on him. How could he not of thought of it before!

"On second thought, we will not go to Contigo," he quickly said with an odd glow flaring in his eyes. "And you Felix will not go to Imil."

"What?" bellowed Felix.

Jenna for some reason was relieved but then again she was rather confused with Isaac's sudden change of mind. "What do you mean Isaac?" she asked.

"We will all go to *Lemuria*."

Felix frowned and Jenna beamed in understanding.

"Of course!" Jenna shouted.

"Isaac, going there would be quite a gamble," Felix said. "We do not now whether or not Picard has yet mastered the ability."

"But its been a year since we have last seen him and learned what he was trying to develop," Jenna told her brother. "Picard is quite an able adept and I am positive that he could master any Mercury ability given a year's practice."

"Even if we are wrong," Isaac concluded, "we could still borrow the *Wind Chaser*."

The *Wind Chaser* was Picard's Lemurian crafted ship modified with the legendary wings of Contigo which enabled it to fly across land and water. She also boasted the Loho experimental cannon making her the sleekest and most deadly vessel in all of Weyard . The ship had assisted Felix's party traverse considerable distances in very small allotments of time during the end of their quest to ignite Mars Lighthouse. Felix knew the capabilities of the ship and then recognized the genius of Isaac's plan. With the *Wind Chaser* they could travel to Contigo without having to sail down the Gondowan coast. Basically, if Picard had not mastered the ability of teleportation yet, they could still travel to Contigo and Imil within the same time span it would have taken them even if they didn't take the roughly three week journey to Lemuria.

"The *Wind Chaser* would be of strategic importance," Felix admitted, "but still, the journey to Lemuria has specific dangers much greater than the previous destinations."

"Felix is right," said Jenna. "We would have to constantly be on the look out for pirates and then there's simply *finding* Lemuria again."

"Babi Lighthouse should aid us considerably," Isaac reminded them. "And apparently quite a few sailors have found Lemuria since its construction. The danger is not as great as it once was."

Felix seemed deep in thought and then began assessing something that he knew Jenna and Isaac would not be too thrilled about.

"We will head for Lemuria the day after tomorrow," Felix stated, "But, I would like to suggest something that would make our trip a little more worth our while."

"What is it?" Jenna asked him.

"Well," Felix said slowly, "Lemuria is home to some of the most renowned healers in all of Weyard. It may prove to be beneficial if...if we bring Adrian along with us."

"No," Isaac said firmly. "We can take him to see the Great Healer here in New Vale. There is no sense in bringing him on a dangerous voyage such as this."

"While you two have debated whether or not to take Adrian to the Great Healer," Felix said with an on-edge tone, "I have taken the initiative to inform him of your son's condition, and according to him, there is no remedy known to man. The Lemurian healers are as old as time itself and know of many ancient afflictions that may include Adrian's."

"Why didn't you tell us this?" Jenna asked him.

"What was there to tell?" Felix replied.

Isaac seemed to have lost his temper for the first time in ages. "Who gave you permission to ask the Great Healer about Adrian? He is our son Felix, not yours."

"I fear that your pride over your sons has clouded your judgment Isaac," Felix said still fully in control over his frustration with his sister's husband.

"*What?*" Isaac roared with anger.

"Adrian has a condition that seriously could place him in grave danger in the present world we live in," Felix stated. "Your pride over not wanting to admit your son has a handicap has interfered with your priorities of his well-being."

"*Enough!*" Isaac shouted in the climax of his fury. "You are treading among thorns Felix! You will *not* tell me how to raise my own son and claim that / am not concerned with Adrian's safety!"

"Then swallow your pride and let the boy come with us!" Felix reasoned.

"It is *you* who are not concerned for Adrian's well being!!" Isaac said still fuming. "The Great Eastern Sea is no place for a child in times such as these!"

"In time," Felix countered, "Weyard will be no place for a child at all. Adrian is one of the first of the new generation of adept guardians. He will want to follow in yours and Jenna's footsteps but as long as his affliction remains, he will be in mortal danger from the forces of evil who want nothing more than to sever the new line of guardians."

Jenna gasped. She had neglected to realize that her sons were bound to be the targets of Alex once he had gained enough power and support. She also never thought that Adrian and Michael would one day want to serve as Weyard's guardians. The thought made her cringe.

Isaac slowly began to cool down after hearing Felix's logic and reluctantly let his rage no longer be his master. The three didn't say anything for a long while until Isaac finally spoke up.

"Fine," he reluctantly said scratching his chin. "The boy can come."

"As well as Michael," Jenna added.

"No, Michael will be safer in New Vale," Felix told her. "An entire town of mostly adepts is a guard not even Tolbi's troops could offer, yet alone us."

There was silence once again, this time for much longer than before. The rain was pouring now and all that could be heard was the steady serenade of water outside, the echoing thunder nearby, and Adrian's and Michael's laughter in the next room. Jenna closed her eyes and put her hands over her face. Isaac and Felix could tell she was battling the emotions of a mother who was feeling that she was just about to lose one of her children. Isaac put his arm around his wife and they embraced, Jenna streaming silent tears on his shoulder.

***Chapter 3*: Desire's Resonance**

Disclaimer: Did I already mention that I don't own Golden Sun or anything else associated with it? I think I did.

Chapter III

- Desire's Resonance -

Two days later, Adrian anxiously awaited for the first signs of dawn. He had hardly slept the previous night out of pure anticipation for the next morning and thought to himself that he would be paying for it later that day as they embarked on their long journey to Lalivero. Michael was awake as well, and for some reason was taking a keen interest into staring at the ceiling.

He *was* jealous that his brother was going on a mission to Lemuria and he wasn't, but at his age, jealousy could not take that strong of a foothold in his mind, so, he thought of other things.

"You know you are going to have to cross the Karagol Sea to reach Gondowan passage, right?" Michael remarked.

"Yes," Adrian answered. "And the Suhalla Desert after that."

"Wow," Michael said in a trance. "I wish I was candihapped."

"It's *handicapped*, and I am not!" said Adrian immediately taking offense.

"Whatever you say," Michael shrugged. "Oh and before I forget!" Michael leapt out of bed to retrieve a large roll of blank parchment from his closet. "This is for you."

Adrian accepted the paper. It was unusually cold. "Uh, thank you Michael, but don't you know that I have several other rolls already?"

"Yes I do, but I doubt you have this kind," Michael said full of pride.

"Well, what *kind* is it?" Adrian asked him, curiosity making his mind itch terribly.

"Just watch." Michael unrolled the paper a little bit and flattened it on his bed. The paper seemed very thick to Adrian, and he would soon find out why. Letters started appearing out of nowhere, first there was a H, then an E, followed by two L's, and lastly an O.

"How..." Adrian said with his mouth nearly hanging to the floor.

"It's known as Venus parchment to us adepts, but to everyone else, it's just some thick expensive paper. It cost me a whole silver dubloon!"

"Okay, *what* is it?" Adrian asked never being more confused in his life.

"Well, from what Uncle Felix tells me," Michael began, "it's made of Tundarian Pine bark. It's a common tree found in Tundaria!"

"Yeah Michael, I picked that up too."

Michael ignored the comment. "You see, the Tundarian Pine is the only tree in all of Weyard whose branches stay alive even when severed from the mother tree. Uncle Felix calls it an...uh...adaptation! Because the winds of Tundaria are extraordinarily strong during the winter season, the

Tundarian Pines clustered throughout the continent are always completely torn down. But instead of all the trees dying, spring arrives and the broken branches and stumps buried deep beneath the snow begin to take root and grow at an accelerated pace until winter arrives. Then the whole process starts all over again! Don't you understand how the Venus parchment works now Adrian?"

"Uh, are you giving me a parchment that will grow into bigger parchment in the spring?" Adrian said sarcastically, otherwise having not a clue.

"I'm disappointed in you Adrian," Michael said in a melancholy voice. "I expected you of all people to understand the simple physics of alchemy seen here."

"Alchemy?" Adrian said thoroughly surprised. "What does alchemy have to do with this parchment?"

"Everything," Michael answered. "Define alchemy, would you please Adrian?"

Adrian looked directly in his brother's dark green eyes covered by his shaggy brown hair expecting some sort of mischief to come about from his answer. "The manipulation of the elements," He slowly quoted from a book he had recently read.

"Exactly, now apply that definition to what you have just learned about the Venus parchment."

Now Adrian was frustrated. Usually in exercises such as these of where his brother tried to outwit him were foiled by Adrian's ability to assess and analyze quickly. But now that his mind was tired from the lack of sleep, Michael would soon get to have the satisfaction of him begging for the wisdom he could not acquire for himself.

"I give up Michael, how does it work," Adrian said grumpily.

"It's *so* simple though!"

"Apparently *not*, now get on with it!" Adrian raised his voice and Michael could tell he could play with his prey no longer.

"Okay, okay, I'll tell you," Michael nervously laughed but immediately stopped when he saw his brother's blue-eyed glare. "Well for starters, look at Uncle Felix. He's an earth adept and a gardener at that. When he wants a plant to grow faster, he uses his psynergy to tap into the elemental make-up of the desired plant to spur its growth . The only reason he can do this is because all things that sprout from the ground have the elements of earth in them, and he is a corresponding adept. Therefore, because of the earth-earth relationship Uncle Felix and the plants share, he has the power to manipulate them at will."

Adrian examined the parchment a little more closely. The writing area was perfectly smooth, but when he felt the back, he could feel a thick, and fine cut layer of tree bark.

"Okay," Adrian realized partially. "Somehow you manipulated the bark to protrude letters through the parchment."

"Yes! That's it! I used my psynergy to command the elemental presence of the earth in the bark to pierce the paper and form letters!" Michael was ecstatic that his brother finally realized the genius of his gift. Adrian didn't seem to think it was all that great though.

"Why couldn't I make the same thing with the trees we have in New Vale? Why go all the way to Tundaria?"

"Because," Michael said seeming to be a little annoyed, "the Tundarian Pine is the only tree in the world that can live in shreds!"

"What does that have to do with anything?" Adrian said seeming to be even more annoyed than his brother.

"*Because*," Michael repeated "Once any normal tree dies, so do the elements that once resided there. If the elemental presence in an object is exhausted or not present, there is no way that alchemy can manipulate it. But with the Tundarian Pine, the elements are never absent because every single part of the tree is *a/ways* living. Now do you understand?"

Adrian would be lying if he said no. He never knew that alchemy could be used like that and if all adepts could control their corresponding element in such a manner, what was the limit?

"This is a dangerous art," he informed his brother. "And you are telling me that I could go out right now and make the nearest tree do back flips?"

"That's the thing," Michael sighed. "There *are* significant boundaries to this power. It took me months to write my first word with the Venus parchment and it seriously drains your psynergy. Even Uncle Felix tried the parchment and he compared the psynergy drain to that of after a fierce battle. He even tried to manipulate a tree in a similar fashion of what you suggested, but he said that he didn't have enough psynergy to accomplish anything."

"Then why in the world would I want to use it!" Adrian exclaimed.

"It has distinct advantages," Michael said.

"Like..."

"Think about it Adrian! Once you became an accomplished enough user of the parchment, whatever you think will be recorded! Whenever you want to write about something that you don't know how to describe in words, through the Venus parchment you can transfer your thoughts with psynergy and actually get results! Adrian, I guess its time for you to see my motives in giving you this, that is if you haven't figured it out already."

Adrian had a rough idea.

"Since I can't go on this quest, I would like you to keep some sort of journal you can share with me once you get back. It has been both of our dreams to leave New Vale and escape out into the open world, and now you have that freedom. I however may never get a chance to see what you are going to see, and just for you to describe your adventure to me, would be...enough."

"What are you talking about Michael?" Adrian asked him.
"You know fully well that once we are old enough we can go anywhere we want!"

"Maybe," Michael said in a sullen tone. "But I may never get to see Lemuria."

"Nonsense. When we are old enough Lemuria will be the first place we set sail for," Adrian assured his brother. Michael gave a small smile, but he still didn't seem completely assured.

"Nevertheless," Adrian sighed, "I will try to learn how to write with the Venus parchment so I can keep a journal of all I see. After all, you did spend a whole silver dubloon."

Michael's doubt immediately lifted from his eyes and instead transformed into a fantastic glow of the sincerest gratitude. "You're the best Adrian! This means a lot to me considering you hate using psynergy and all."

Adrian winced. He had forgotten the strenuous concentration described by his brother required to make the parchment work. But, he could not back down from the promise he had just made, so he would just have to try.

The two boys laid there until they could hear the first signs of life downstairs. They could hear the clanking of dishes being withdrawn from the cupboards and being set on the hardwood table. The cows were mooing in the barn, mostly likely from their father milking them, and to their utmost glee, they could smell an aroma of sausage and bacon tickling their nostrils all the way from downstairs. All they needed were three words and they would be downstairs in an instant.

"Come on," Michael whined. "Call us down already!"

"Patience Michael" Adrian said coolly. "You know what comes from being to hasty."

"Don't even think about starting on one of your guilt-trip lectures on me Adrian because I am hungry, and I am armed." Michael then playfully pulled out a wooden sword from under his bed that he had once made at age six and pointed it at his brother.

"Do you dare challenge me?" Adrian played along pulling out a similar sword.

"Only a fool would pass up such an opportunity," Michael taunted.

But just about as Michael was about to plunge, Jenna was calling downstairs.

"Michael, Adrian, breakfast!"

The boys dropped their swords and raced down the stairs at full speed to be greeted by a table jam-packed with their favorite breakfast delights.

"I hope you two are hungry!" Jenna told her children. They nodded and waited patiently for their father to sit down before they indulged themselves.

As the family ate in silence for half an hour or so there was a knock on the door. Jenna got up and opened it to reveal Felix completely dressed in traveling apparel, a breastplate sure to be hidden under his robes, and finally his sword and shield mounted on his back.

"Good morning Jenna! What a beautiful day for a trek through Angara!" Felix said joyously as he embraced his sister.

"Good morning Felix," Jenna said a little less enthusiastically. "Someone seems a little too happy for a man about to go on a mission which could very likely end up getting us all killed."

"Greetings Felix!" Isaac said as he got up from the table to shake hands with his brother-in-law. Isaac examined him and noticed all the heavy armor and weaponry he was wearing. Most noticeable was the *Sol Blade* on his back which weighed at least fifteen pounds all in itself.

"Felix!" Isaac cried in disbelief. "You aren't going to take all that with you, are you? There is at least fifty mounted on yourself!"

"Actually there is only forty, but not to worry Isaac, I have trained long and hard these many years in carrying heavy loads across great distances. I can actually carry twenty pounds more so this short journey to Lalivero harbor should be quite relaxing."

"Well, whatever you say," Isaac said secretly wishing he had the strength and endurance to carry all his favorite weapons and armor around as easily as his brother-in-law could.

"All packed and ready to go my young scholar?" Felix asked as Adrian stuck half an omelet in his mouth. He was about to answer but fortunately he caught his mother's disapproving glance. So he chewed and swallowed the omelet first which took at least thirty seconds before he began to speak.

"Yes Uncle Felix. So, whenever you all are ready, tell me and I will go get dressed into my traveling clothes."

"Excellent!" Felix jubilantly exclaimed. "How about you go get dressed now and we'll leave right when you're finished!"

"Yes sir!" Adrian replied and he immediately ran upstairs. Michael watched in a slowly developing disgust for his brother's enthusiasm. Once again the seeds of jealousy could of easily formed a fiery contempt for Adrian, but his love and devotion to his family remained dominant in his judgment.

"Michael," Felix called, "after you wash and put away your dishes, can you please join me outside?"

Michael wasn't expecting this at all so he had to ask his uncle to repeat the question. Once he did and Michael agreed, he cleared his plate and washed his dishes much faster than he had ever done before in his life. After he was finished, he found his uncle looking at the mountains to the

west. The sun had been in the sky for at least an hour now but its splash of color had not yet completely erased itself from the mountain tops. Brilliant oranges danced around the purple slopes of the west as the sky took the reflection of both their colors intertwined.

"You wanted me Uncle Felix?" Michael asked.

"Oh...yes," he said regaining his composure after looking absently into the great sea above him. "I have a task for you."

Michael's face lighted up. "What kind of task?"

"The kind that takes dedication and discipline," Felix said in an important fashion.

Michael's excitement was building tremendously. "Do you want me to protect New Vale's gates from monster attacks?"

Felix laughed softly, but shook his head.

"Or maybe hide away a few yards behind you guys on your journey to Lalivero harbor just in case you need extra protection!"

No again.

"What do you want me to do then?" Michael asked very puzzled.

"Well, If it wouldn't be any trouble," Felix began, "I really would appreciate it if you would keep an eye on the djinn."

Michael's face was stripped from any of the accumulated suspense and excitement that was present and was immediately replaced with a look of utmost disappointment.

Felix saw the transformation and kicked himself for thinking that Michael would fall for such a sugar-coated hoax of an assignment.

"Forgive me Michael," Felix said apologetically. "I guess that wasn't what you were expecting."

Michael shook his head.

"Still," Felix added putting his arm around his nephew's shoulder, "I still need you to take care of that djinn. You are the only one I trust that I know will protect it at all costs."

Michael sighed and looked into Felix's deep brown eyes, and as if he was not listening to a word his uncle was saying, he uttered the dominant thought raging within his mind.

"I want to go Uncle Felix, I really, *really* want to go."

Felix's fear that Michael was angry with him for trying to fool him into taking pride in babysitting the djinn had disappeared, so instead he could clearly focus on the present matter at hand.

"Michael," Felix consoled him, "your place is here right now in New Vale. It is imperative that we look out for your safety and it is the adepts of this town alone that can insure that. We must protect you to the best of our ability so that when your time comes, you can leave and embark on your own journey."

"Bringing Adrian along on a journey across two continents and an entire sea infested with monsters, pirates and who knows what else doesn't sound very safe to me," Michael dismally said.

Felix sighed as he paused to think about how he would phrase his next thoughts in order to help his nephew understand that his parents weren't favoring Adrian over him.

"Let me tell you something Michael, something that you have probably already heard millions of times. You see, your father was assigned a quest fourteen years ago which entailed that he prevent the elemental lighthouses from being lit. However, after meeting up with my party at the Jupiter Lighthouse and learning of the Weyard situation in its entirety, he decided to turn his allegiances to the more humanitarian of the two causes, that being to ignite the remaining beacon and prevent the world from eroding destruction. This was no light decision your father made Michael, because once he committed himself to the releasing of alchemy, he would also have to commit himself to the task of preventing its misuse. This is the promise your father made when he joined me and my party and through that promise alone that was sealed with the lighting of the final lighthouse is where your father's loyalties will always reside. So, forever will his quest be in maintaining peace in the world of alchemy.

"This is his quest Michael, his *quest*. I want you to consider this word and listen carefully to what next I have to say. A quest is a journey with a purpose where one dedicates their life, their strength, and their passion all for the sake of its completion. Your father is a prime example of this word at its best light. Now Michael I want to remind you of a quest Isaac and your mother undertook twelve years ago, it being none other than that of parenthood. You might think being a parent isn't a quest, but when you think of the actuality of it, it really is. For instance, apply our definition of a quest to parenthood. Parenthood is a journey with a purpose where two people dedicate their lives, their strength, and their

passion all for the sake of its completion. The two sound very similar, no? Michael, your parents undertook the journey of raising you and your brother with the purpose of training you in the ways of goodness and virtue. They do this with all their strength, love, and passion and will continue to raise and influence you with these things until the day they die. So have we established that parenthood is a quest? Good. Now if you would take notice of the last part of our definition, "all for the sake of its completion". Parenthood is basically a similar quest to that of Isaac's current one for it will take him all his natural life to accomplish. In other words, parents strive all their lives for the completion of their parenting just as your father dedicates his life to the cause of attaining peace. This is where we get into the roles Jenna and Isaac have as your parents. Don't worry Michael, I'm just about done. Your father and mother are under the servitude of the universal right of parenthood to protect you with all that they are made of. So when something comes up, like your brother's handicap, they are under obligation from the purest love of their hearts to insure his safety. The best way, Michael to accomplish this is to bring him to the Lemurian healers. Yes the journey will be dangerous, but without the ability to use psynergy in the world today, Adrian would be at even greater risk than even that of a combined attack by all the pirates of the Great Eastern Sea. As for you, the safest precaution your parents can make is to leave you here under the wing of an entire town of adepts. You and your brother's safety and well-being are the primary aspects in their quest of parenthood Michael, a quest in which they will never detract from. Now after all this said, do you now understand why we can not take you with us?"

Felix finished his speech and was delighted to still find Michael paying full attention.

"Kind of...," Michael said a little sheepishly.

Felix paused and sighed yet again. "One day you will fully understand Michael. One day..."

The two gazed at the final moments of the Angaran sunset before Michael nodded at his uncle in attempt to without words communicate that he understood enough, and then turned to go back inside the house. Once he entered, Jenna who was listening by the window, came to Felix's side.

She embraced her brother and layed her head on his massive shoulders.

"Eavesdropping?" Felix jokingly asked her. "You're worse than the kids."

"I remember a time," Jenna contemplated after a light laugh, "when you were a rather soft-spoken individual. And since when did an old bachelor like yourself learn the fundamentals of parenting?"

Felix chuckled and twirled Jenna around in the air. "Ever since my tomboy sister got married, I guess," he smirked. "I figured that if she could find somebody to settle down with, then anybody could. That was the sign that told me I better pay attention to what you and Isaac were doing so that when my time comes, I'd be way ahead of the game."

Jenna opened her mouth wide in surprise and began to laugh. "What is *that* supposed to mean?" she said as she began to repeatedly pound him in the stomach.

"Nothing!" Felix pleaded as finally Jenna pushed him off the porch onto the soft grass below. The two laughed themselves to tears as they wrestled all across the front yard, constantly pinning one another only to be ultimately counter-pinned yet again.

Isaac, Adrian, and Michael watched in fascination through the front window.

"Such children!" Adrian remarked.

"Yeah," Michael agreed.

"Should I go tell them that the fertilizer still hasn't completely settled in the front yard yet?" Isaac asked them.

"Ewww," the two boys giggled in unison as Isaac bellowed in laughter as well.

Morale was high for the party and any jealousy or bitterness Michael had once felt towards his brother had now seemingly dispersed. The dawn of this journey seemed to promise smooth sailing for the future, or so Isaac thought.

But then his optimism came face to face with his better judgment.

If only it could be that easy...

***Chapter 4*: Adrian**

Reviews:

Master of Reality- Thank you so much for taking the time to review. Having put three chapters up and having received no reviews probably would have discouraged me permanently. But, from receiving one, (yours) I was able to get over myself. It's not about the reviews, but about the effort. I'm learning and having so much fun writing this story. It's just a bonus that you and some others at GSR are reading along with me.

Disclaimer: Oh, it's that time again. (sigh) Ahem. I don't own Goldensun. That wasn't so hard I guess.

Chapter IV

- Adrian -

Isaac and Jenna's parents bid their families final goodbyes as the party of four prepared to exit New Vale's town gates. Also waiting at the gate was the scholar Kraden, who was beckoning for Felix to speak with him.

"First of all Felix, I thank you for agreeing to participate in my current line of research," the scholar remarked.

"Don't mention it," Felix replied. "You have never led us wrong before."

"I wish the others were more partial," Kraden said lowering his head.

"Your pursuit Kraden, is a great one," Felix told him, "and great pursuits will reveal fantastic discoveries. It is

impossible for one man's dream to be shared by everyone. Do not lose heart."

Kraden smiled. "You will forever have this old man's gratitude Felix. Oh, and by the way, don't bother to check in Vale or Kalay, I have already searched there."

Felix nodded and they exchanged farewells. He then joined the rest of the party who were waiting for him just outside the gates.

"Bye Mother! Bye Father! Bye Adrian, and remember to use the parchment!" Michael shouted from the archway of the gate waving his hands wildly.

"I won't forget!" Adrian shouted back.

"And Michael!" Felix said turning his head back toward his nephew. "Make sure you check the djinn once a week!"

"He's safe with me Uncle Felix!"

The party gave one final wave and after receiving one in return, Felix, Isaac, Jenna, and Adrian faced forward and so began their quest to Lemuria. The weather couldn't have been more inviting for the sun was pleasantly warming their bodies while a swift wind slowly blew against their faces. Their first day's journey would bring them to Vault shortly after nightfall where there, they would rest at an inn until morning. In the meantime, Adrian took in all that he saw. This was the first time he had ever been outside New Vale's gates so his first experience with the open wilderness left him thoroughly fascinated. The mere openness that he looked upon rejected the very laws of the world he once knew. New Vale had many fields, and open grasslands just like here, but the wilderness didn't have any thriving towns just over the next hill, or around the next bend. Here they

could climb a mountain and probably not even see one sign of human settlement for as far as the eye could see! Adrian saw birds soaring overhead and rodents of all shapes and sizes scurrying along their merry way. He saw magnificent wild steeds running with the wind and to his utmost glee, wolves trailing from behind trying feebly to match the horses' unmatchable speed.

A few hours of their journey consisted of sightings just like these until eventually one lone wolf diverted his pursuit from a hopelessly more agile horse to Isaac's party. The creature slowly edged his way towards the four, growling and boasting its razor sharp teeth during the entire advance. Felix pulled his sword from his back as the wolf started walking towards Adrian.

"No Felix!" Jenna said with a raging passion. "Don't slay the wolf in front of Adrian! He is too young to witness death this close hand!"

"Well then what do we do?" Felix asked her. "We can't outrun it." As he was about to say something else, Isaac began advancing on the predator.

"Isaac!" Jenna furiously shouted.

"Don't worry Jenna," he soothed her with his dignified calm. "No blood will be shed today."

Her face became emotionless as she and her brother watched in anticipation of what Isaac was going to do. The wolf then broke into a charge towards Adrian causing Jenna to scream. Isaac nimbly ran into the middle of his son and the wolf and with his sword still in its sheath, he stood his ground. The maddened creature increased its speed and right when it was about to make its final approach on Isaac, it jumped as if intending to clear him and pounce on its

original target. Isaac anticipating this, jumped along with the wolf manipulating gravity to suspend him in the air long enough to dodge the rapid swipes of the wolf and to grab both its front feet. Still in mid-air, he twirled the wolf around two times before using all the acquired force to launch the predator well away from the party. The wolf hit the ground hard but was on its feet again after only a few seconds. But, Isaac used this time to its fullest. Right before the creature was about to make another charge, he had already created a small fissure directly below it. The wolf unaware of such tactics, fell hopelessly to the bottom.

"Isaac!" Jenna screamed. "I told you not to kill it!"

"I didn't," Isaac again calmly said, "but we aren't done here yet. Jenna, I need you to set fire to the grass around the edges of the fissure."

Jenna hesitated but saw Isaac's pleading glance. She obeyed him and made a ring of fire outlining the fissure just as he had instructed.

"Good work!" Isaac shouted over the crackling flames. "Now Felix, I need you to uproot at least ten feet of grass around the fire so it doesn't catch to the rest of this field!"

Felix complied immediately and with a simple concentration of psynergy, the ground around the fire became nothing more than a large perimeter of dirt.

The three stared at their handiwork for a few seconds, black smoke now climbing towards the sky and the flame's fury flying harmlessly in the air. The dirt perimeter was working for the flames that burned so wildly came at least ten feet short of any nearby grass.

"Thank you Felix," Isaac said as he rushed over to his son who didn't seem to be phased at all by the attack. "Are you alright Adrian?"

"Yes," the boy said, a grin slowly creeping up his face. Isaac began to smile as well.

"Well," he addressed the party, "I think we're done here. Onward then."

"Isaac," Jenna said, "What did you just do?"

"You mean what did *we* just do?" he corrected her. "Well, I created a fissure to temporarily trap the wolf."

"Doesn't falling into fissures usually cause things to plummet to their death?" Jenna interrupted.

"Usually," Isaac inquired, "but the one I made is just small enough for the wolf to jump out of if it really wanted to, and just in case the wolf really did want to get out while we were still there, I asked you to create a ring of fire to prevent it from climbing out. Once the fire dies down, the wolf will be able to leave and go about its own business again, but by that time, we will be well out of harm's way."

"Well done Isaac," Felix congratulated him. "It seems your skills as a leader have not waned since the last time you have led us. Although, you could of merely made a fissure small enough to make sure the wolf didn't die from the fall, but big enough to make escape impossible."

"I could of," Isaac said turning to his wife, "but the creature would of ultimately died. I said there would be no death for the sake of Adrian and I meant it."

Jenna stared deep into her husband's eyes as the shock of the attack began to disappear. She thanked the heavens that she had him as their children's father.

"Thank you Isaac," Jenna whispered as she lovingly wrapped her arms around his neck. "I don't know why I sometimes doubt you."

"I know why," he replied, tenderly stroking her cheek as he received her embrace. "Now that we have children, your concerns have considerably changed. But trust me Jenna, just because I am a warrior doesn't mean my concerns haven't changed as well. You, Adrian and Michael will always come second to nothing."

Jenna lowered her head and pondered whether her next question was in any way relevant. "Isaac, if you had to pick from either us or the destruction of the world, what would you choose?"

"My family comes second to none," he immediately answered her. "The world would mean nothing to me without them. But, if that predicament were ever to arise though, I *would* find a way to save them both."

Jenna still had her head down. Deep in her soul she could sense a danger, a danger that could just possibly force Isaac to make that decision. Now that she thought of it, she knew it would be inevitable for Alex would never pass up the opportunity to attack Isaac's only weak spot. A new sense of dread and vulnerability flooded through her. Isaac sensed these emotions so he held her closer and tighter. Jenna let his warmth counterbalance all her fears and doubts and after a couple minutes, her worries began to fade away.

She then lifted her head. She would be strong, strong for her children and strong for him.

Jenna finally let go of Isaac and took his hand instead. As the two turned toward Felix and Adrian who were patiently waiting behind them, Felix and Isaac silently gave each other a nod indicating that they were ready to depart. With the flames still strongly burning and the black smoke still never ceasing to cloud the sky, they pressed onward.

The party arrived in Vault much later than they anticipated. The sun had already been down for hours and by the time they had checked in at an inn, even the local taverns had emptied out for the night. Immediately after they were shown to their room, Adrian plopped on to one of the four single beds and fell asleep. Felix and Isaac dismantled their equipment and by the time they were finished, Jenna had retired as well. Felix loaded his sword and armor into a dresser nearby a vacant bed while Isaac simply dropped his things on the floor before crashing onto his pillow. Isaac stole one last glance at his brother-in-law only to see him wide awake silently sharpening one of his hunting knives.

"Felix," Isaac sleepily mumbled. "Sometimes I question whether or not you are human."

Felix stopped his sharpening to look up at him. "Kalay is a two day journey Isaac, that means no inns along the way. If we are going to spend a night in the wilderness, I want to have all my weapons in perfect condition, just in case."

Isaac grunted something but could keep his eyes open no longer. The wee hours eventually broke through Felix's resistance as well as he climbed into the remaining bed leaving his knives unfinished. Silence then resonated over Vault.

But somewhere else on the fringes of reality, another dawn was screaming. Mere hours later after Adrian had first laid his head down to sleep, his mind was being engulfed by dreams and images; a white foal, a black steed, a hungry pack of wolves, *no escape*. The attackers cornered and advanced the horses until they were in striking distance. The black steed shielded her foal from the first assault, but fell in a bloody agony from the second as the wolves clawed and slashed at her midnight skin.

Adrian woke up.

Something wasn't right. But it was just a dream...or was it? He silently leapt out of bed and grabbed his small sword and a coat. Felix and his parents were still sound asleep and the steady harmony of crickets outside indicated that the night was still young. Adrian crept out of the room and broke into a run immediately after he exited the inn's doors. Somewhere nearby a living creature was being slaughtered. Somewhere nearby he *knew* that innocent blood was being spilled. Adrian didn't know where to run to, but he ran anyway.

Torin and his party of weary soldiers made their final approach on Vault's city gates. They had been deployed by the mayor ten hours earlier to investigate a mysterious fire that had been spotted by the town watch tower. Torin's troops, more commonly known as Torin's Blazers were specialized men in the art of navigation. Their ability to traverse even the most hindering of terrain and quickly cover the greatest of distances rendered them as an obvious choice for the mayor's assignment. The town watcher estimated that the fire was at least seven hours by foot northwest, so the mayor ordered Torin to reach that position

in half the time before the fire died out. Torin and his men accepted and with only light blades equipped, they immediately embarked.

They had made their way to their destination with frightening endurance, only stopping twice for water from their small canteens. Torin's Blazers passed through impassable forests in which they could of traveled by the roads that were built around them; they cleared wide streams with merely their skill and their speed; they conquered the many hills that scattered in their opposition, and they *ran* the entire way. In two hours time, they reached their journey's end where they found a slowly dying ring of fire guarding a perfectly visible fissure.

"What the...," Torin's first officer Will murmured as he looked upon the grassless earth surrounding the anomaly.

The party heard a distinct growl develop within the crackling flames. Harlem, the youngest member of the group, flinched and took a step back.

"Everyone pull out your swords," Torin ordered as the noise grew louder and more fierce.

"Sir, I fear the weapons we possess will have no power against whatever demon lies before us," Harlem urged as he pulled out his blade doubtfully.

"This is no demon," Torin said looking earnestly at the sight before him.

"The sergeant is right," Will assured the soldiers. "If this was a demon, it would have wasted no time in surfacing from hell's flames. We saw the smoke hours ago."

"Hell must be a long way down then," Harlem resolved.

"Or maybe the demon is just waiting for the perfect chance to strike!" another soldier shouted out.

"What kind of men are you?" Will challenged the party. "Are you soldiers or are you superstitious little children?"

The party seemed to gather strength from his rebuke, although Harlem still remained skeptical.

"Be wary men," Torin warned for the growls were slowly becoming steady roars. "The creature is preparing for attack!"

Sure enough a shadowy monster enshrouded in flames leapt from the fissure before them. A wolf Torin noticed, but he had never seen one covered in fire before. The maddened creature slashed at the air as if in tremendous pain, but somehow targeted one of the men. In a frenzy of fury, the wolf toppled one of the soldiers, causing his cloak to burst into flames. The startled man screamed and flailed for his sword which he had dropped shortly after being charged. Torin rushed to his aid but was beaten by Harlem. The young soldier rammed the wolf off his comrade and thrust his blade into the creature's side.

"I order you back to the valley of the damned, hell hound," Harlem whispered as he thrust deeper. The fire caught to his cloak but he didn't care; he would not leave his prey until he saw the creature's very life wither and die in front of him.

"Harlem, enough!" Torin ordered. "The wolf is dead or either on the verge of dying.."

"This is no wolf sir, it is a...,"

"Damn what you think it is Harlem, it is merely a wolf that was foolish enough to jump through that ring of fire!" Torin tried to reason. "Its coat ignited once he tried to pass through the flames. It is *not* a demon! Get a hold of yourself man! And for Weyard's sake put out those flames from your cloak before you roast like that wolf did!"

Harlem complied and took off his cloak to stomp the flames off. Meanwhile, the party was attending to the wounds of the soldier whom the wolf had attacked.

"Status!" Torin barked.

"Minor cuts and bruises sir," Will answered. "But I'm afraid the damage dealt by the burns is extensive. Recommend we send the fastest and strongest Blazer to carry this soldier back to Vault immediately!"

Torin considered it. His men were all tired from the non-stop run and it would be foolish to send every single one of them back when only one was necessary. He pondered who would be the best candidate for the job, but then cringed at the obvious answer. Harlem was by far the strongest and fastest, his endurance even outmatching his first officer; but his hellish fantasies disturbed him greatly. Could the young soldier keep his head about him on an assignment as critical as this?

"Harlem!" Torin addressed.

"Yes sir!" he answered now ridded of the menacing flames on his cloak.

"Are you up to the task of returning this soldier back to Vault in less the time it took us to get here?" Torin said looking Harlem straight in the eye.

"Well, considering the extra two-hundred pound load and the fact that I am slightly fatigued from the trip, I don't think less than two hours should be too big of a deal...sir." Harlem sarcastically replied.

Cocky, Torin thought. Arrogant, and over-confident. If only this guy could get a grip on reality he might be an excellent fighting man someday.

"Then you accept soldier?" Will asked him, slightly annoyed from his unorthodox response to the Sergeant Brigadier.

"Shall I depart now or later sir?" Harlem asked. "A short rest would do me good."

"Now would be ideal," Torin said and gestured towards the wounded man. Harlem looked at his assignment and then turning to his leader, gave a quick salute.

"I will depart immediately, sir!"

Harlem then carefully picked up the soldier and mounted him on his back. In an instant later, they were gone.

The Blazers watched the two disappear beyond the horizon before diverting their attention back to the sergeant. Torin noticed his men were eagerly watching him and understood what they were waiting for him to say.

"Good work men, you have three hours. Rest yourselves, go swimming in the nearest stream, do whatever but keep in mind that we are going to take the normal road on the way back. That means no shortcuts through the forests. Report back here before dusk ready to march."

So ended their escapade of investigating the mysterious fire. They had discovered nothing important and the scene would

not stop playing back in Torin's mind. A ring of fire, a fissure, a wolf's burning death. Could it have been a sick joke orchestrated by a couple of kids? Then there was that outer ring of dirt that seemed to prevent the fire from spreading. Certainly demons and kids weren't that environmentally friendly. Torin sighed and wondered what he was going to tell the mayor. The Blazers approached the city gates well after dark where they were greeted by a shadowy figure. As they came closer they soon recognized their fellow Blazer, Harlem. After discovering that the wounding soldier was faring well, Torin bid his men good night and dismissed them to their homes. He was relieved that they would not have to spend a large remainder of the night giving the man a soldier's funeral, for such was the tradition of Torin's Blazers to faithfully commemorate a death within their ranks as soon as possible.

Torin and Will walked through the night until they finally reached Will's cottage. The lights were on and the officer gave a wince.

"Your wife still waiting for you Will?" Torin smiled as he patted him on the back. "She's a keeper."

"Yes," Will replied, "but staying up all hours of the night is going to be the death of her someday."

Torin gave a chuckle and offered his hand to his comrade. "Good work today, I will see you in the morning."

"Good night sir," Will said as he accepted his superior's hand. The two shook and departed on their own separate ways.

Torin spent the next hour in a dreamlike animation. He was tired, yet his mind still had things to sort out; The wolf, Will and his wife, and his injured soldier were all dominant

thoughts raging inside him. Torin walked about the streets thinking about all the things long passed in his life and all the things he wished he could replay or relive.

He was a middle-aged man, brown hair, bearded facial features, brown eyes, of a fairly large stature, and wore a handsome complexion. His team had commented on numerous occasions of how it was impossible that Torin had remained unmarried for so long. But he alone held the reason for his isolation, a story untold which would remain so until death did he part.

Exhaustion was mounting upon Torin's resistance as he decided that he would rent a room at the inn instead of walking to his house at the far edge of town. He was about to reach for the door handle when all of a sudden the doors swung open and knocked him off his feet. Torin watched in confusion as a small boy no older than twelve dashed from the building and headed for the nearest gate to the town's exterior. Torin lifted himself to his feet and rushed in close pursuit of the mysterious boy who was now half way to clearing the town wall. The boy escaped the soldier's field of view as he successfully climbed over the wall and landed with a silent thud. Torin readied himself as he prepared to jump the barrier and with all the remaining strength and speed he could muster, he expertly climbed the wall and thrust himself skillfully to the ground. Just as he landed he heard a handful of collective growls and snarls. He looked to his right where he saw the boy standing motionless, staring at a small canyon below him. The scene Torin gazed upon was tragic chaos as a large pack of wolves cornered a small white foal, already drenched in the blood of an already slain black horse. The wolves seemed to be making a final advance toward the foal who squealed in sorrow and in fear. Torin was about to grab the boy and make a break for the

city gates before the wolves detected them, but was instead frozen solid by the boy's puzzling change of stance.

Out of nowhere the scene erupted in a series of anomalies that would leave Torin questioning the forces of nature forevermore, for the ground beneath each wolf suddenly shot upwards and formed circular platforms holding each individual wolf separately, carrying them rapidly skyward. The young boy motioned his hands higher and higher and the height of the platforms seemed to correspond to each of these movements. Mere seconds later while each wolf was held hostage by their earthen prison in the sky, another platform, this time much larger rose from the ground and floated to the safety of the open plains surrounding Vault. On the platform was the white foal and the dead steed, the foal gazing at the figure on top of the canyon and then to its dead mother. The creature let out one last wail of despair and then galloped into the void of the night. When the foal disappeared from Torin's sight, all hell broke loose. The boy with one swift movement of his hands detonated each of the soaring platforms into thousands of fragments causing each wolf trapped on top to plummet to their death. Torin watched in horror as each body fell and was buried beneath the mighty crashing of the debris. However, unknown to the boy, a couple of wolves had miraculously evaded the initial rising of the stone platforms and had made their way to the top of the canyon. Torin saw these two assassins as they made their way toward the boy's right flank and began to charge. The boy should of been able to see them Torin thought. Why didn't he react? Torin didn't know what was going on but he had seen enough bloodshed for one night and he did not want a human child to join the fray. So he pulled out his saber and rushed to the boy's flank and sliced the leading wolf in half. The second creature dodged Torin's would have been killing blow and made a mad dive for the boy's motionless body. The soldier dived as well and

thrust his saber into the wolf's chest right as the claws of the beast dug deep into Torin's right shoulder. He screamed in pain as the wound began to bleed tremendously. The boy as if in a daze then woke up from whatever trance he was in and for the first time noticed Torin and the dead wolves at his side.

As Adrian regained consciousness and awoke in a silent fury, he quickly scanned the canyon below him to see if his psynergy assault had been successful. He gazed longingly at the newly constructed graveyard and searched within himself for the satisfaction he expected from bringing the bloodthirsty wolves to justice.

He could find no such reverie.

Realizing in disgust of himself that the act was done, he turned to the wounded man. Looking at the two wolves beside the man gave Adrian a fair synopsis of what had commenced while he had blacked out using his powers to tear apart the canyon. While he had blinded himself, by bringing the wolves to their deaths, a couple of the beasts had eluded his earthen grip and made their way up the canyon to take down the butcher who had taken the lives of their entire pack. The man, a soldier by the looks of him must of seen the creatures advancing toward him and attempted to protect Adrian from the retaliating slaughter. Apparently the man had successfully defended him but at the cost of a mauled shoulder. Adrian considered to try and heal the man with the limited healing powers he had independently picked up over the years, but quickly noticed his psynergy was completely tapped. He was not strong enough to carry the wounded man back to the town so he determined that his only option was to return to the inn and ask for help from his parents.

"Thank you," Adrian whispered to the man. "I will go get help."

Adrian couldn't tell if the soldier had nodded, or winced in pain. Either or, he would make his flight to the inn swift. As he ran and his legs became desperately heavier, he realized how much an effect a psynergy drain had on the endurance of a person, none the less a child. He vowed to himself never to misuse such an enormous quantity of power ever again; for he had killed today and nothing was ever to be accomplished from it, ever. Adrian finally reached the inn door and made one final dash toward his parent's room. On the verge of collapsing, he flung the door open and tried to enunciate what he wanted to say as the three inhabitants awoke in surprise.

"Mother...there is...man...wolves...hurt...badly...you need... to heal...now...before...too late."

Jenna leapt out of bed and rushed toward her son. "Adrian are you alright? Where have you been all this time? Are you hurt?"

"Mother...," Adrian coughed, "Now...he's...dying."

"Who's dying Adrian," Isaac said joining Jenna beside him.

"A...soldier," the exhausted boy said now beginning to feel his heart slow down a couple beats as he breathed deeply. "He was...mauled by a wolf."

"Where is he now?" Felix asked him as he equipped a couple daggers under his cloak.

"Outside by the town gates...by the canyon," Adrian managed to say before he tumbled on the bed closest to him and began to snore contently.

"Jenna," Isaac quickly said, "You're with me." She nodded and they hurried to the door. Felix initially followed but was stopped by Isaac just before he could exit the room.

"Felix," he said raising a hand, "I need you to stay here and watch over Adrian until we get back. I don't want him to wake up to an empty room."

Felix was a little peeved, but nodded in submission to his leader and friend.

"Thank you," Isaac said slapping him on the shoulder. He then left the room. Felix stood there for a second or two and then turned toward his nephew who was indulging in a much needed rest. *Oh well, Felix thought. At least I can finish sharpening my daggers.*

Isaac and Jenna found their way to the town gates and started to head toward the canyon Adrian described. Sure enough, there was an injured man and laying beside him were two dead wolves, one completely cut in half. Jenna rushed to the man and kneeled beside him while Isaac pulled out his sword to make sure the other wolf was dead. It was for the creature had taken a fatal sword thrust to the heart.

Jenna tore off the clothes of the mauled shoulder so she could see what she was dealing with. The wounds were deep and from the looks of the present rate of blood loss, the blood would never clot on its own. So she lowered her hand over his shoulder and began to release the fires of rekindlement. The man flinched from the heat, but then calmly lay still. After a minute Jenna lifted her hand to see the man's shoulder glowing bright red. As the light slowly diminished, it was replaced by healed flesh. The soldier quickly sat up and was able to see his shoulder right before

the radiant red light disappeared. His eyes grew wide in amazement as he looked into the eyes of the woman next to him and then back to his fully healed shoulder.

"How...," he began.

"I'm a Mars cleric," Jenna finished for him. "What is your name?"

"Torin," he said. "What is... a Mars cleric?"

Jenna sighed. She hated when she had to explain the whole adept thing to someone who had no idea what alchemy was.

"Isaac!" Jenna called to her husband. "He's healed now so could you come here please?"

Isaac had been staring at the alarming amount of piled rocks at the bottom of the canyon when she called to him.

"Coming," he said as he wondered if Vault had some sort of earthquake he had failed to hear about. Isaac began to turn around when all of a sudden he heard a rumbling of rocks behind him. He turned to the canyon once again and saw a large pile of debris spill into a dark circular hole. As the last rock fell, a wolf emerged from under a large boulder. It limped a few feet, and then fell to the ground lifelessly.

"Curious," he muttered under his breath. He finally answered Jenna's call and walked over to the two. She was busy explaining what an adept was and by the looks of it she was waiting for Isaac to step in and wrap it up.

"And so there are fire adepts, wind adepts, water adepts, and earth adepts all around Weyard," Jenna finished then looking at Isaac.

"Yes," he stepped in, "And Jenna here happens to be a fire adept who has very effective healing power. So, she is appropriately classified as a Mars cleric."

"That is intriguing," Torin commented. "Now that I think of it, I am certain that I met one of your kind a long time ago here in Vault, a boy, by the name of Ivan."

Isaac smiled and remembered his and Garet's encounter with the young wind adept fourteen years prior.

"He possessed strange powers," Torin reflected. "Did you know him?"

"Oh yes," Isaac answered him, "quite well actually. Ivan was a brave young man who accompanied me and my best friend in our quest to restore alchemy to the world."

Isaac noticed blanks running all over the man's face and concluded that Jenna hadn't got to that part of the story yet. "Uh, its a long story," he said. "And there are some things I would like to ask you, that is if you are not to tired."

"Fire away," Torin said. "No pun intended."

"Well for starters, I have no idea what your name is," Isaac chuckled. "My name is Isaac."

"Just call me Torin," the soldier said returning a light laugh as the two shook hands.

"This is my wife Jenna if you haven't been introduced already."

"Yes," Torin said almost in a whisper as his heart skipped a beat, "We have. She was most kind in helping me in a dire time of need."

"It was nothing really," Jenna said blushing a little.

"Oh but it was," Torin insisted now kneeling before her. "I owe you my life Lady Jenna.

If it was possible, Jenna's blush almost matched the color of the Mars Lighthouse's beacon itself. "That won't be necessary," Jenna said almost fumbling her words. "Trust me, it was nothing."

"Speaking of your life," Isaac said redirecting the conversation back to Torin, "How did this happen in the first place?"

"Well," Torin said now getting back to his feet, "It all started when my soldiers and I returned from an assignment out in the countryside."

"Your soldiers?" Jenna questioned.

"Yes, my soldiers," Torin casually remarked. "I lead a local troop stationed here in Vale."

"Torin's Blazers," Isaac commented in realization. "It was you who led the winning team to victory in Tolbi's fourth annual Gondowan Marathon last year."

"Yes," Torin laughed. "That was our troop."

Isaac respected the man's humility for he could of easily said he was sergeant of a troop or victor of a major race, but instead he chose to introduce himself by his first name. "Impressive," Isaac commented with a double meaning implied. "Now the wolves?"

"As I was saying," Torin began, "my soldiers and I just returned from an assignment. I had dismissed them to their

homes for the night, but I didn't feel like sleeping just yet. So, I walked around the town for a while to organize my thoughts but then decided I better turn in. The local inn was closer than my home at the time so I decided I would sleep there for the night. Right when I was about to open the door, a young boy burst out and started running toward one of the town gates. I followed him to here where in that canyon a pack of wolves were closing in on two horses, one already dead, the remaining merely a small white foal. I was about to pick up the boy and flee before the wolves picked up our scent, but I froze when I saw the boy shift into some mysterious stance. All of a sudden, the boy lifted his hands and the canyon erupted in chaos. Each individual wolf that was advancing on the foal was lifted by a small and circular stone platform at least two-hundred feet in the air. Then another platform was raised, this time much bigger than the previous ones and was carried all the way to safety of the open plains. On it was the foal and the dead steed. Once the foal ran well away from the canyon, the boy clenched his fists and every single platform detonated beneath the wolves. Every single wolf plummeted to their death. At least that's what the boy thought. Apparently two wolves were not present when the boy lifted the platforms, but somehow they knew that he had killed the pack. They ran to the boy's right flank and began to attack. Now I do not understand how he did not see the wolves advance toward him because they should of been in his clear sight the entire time, but oddly enough, the boy remained motionless. That's when I intervened and killed the wolves. The mauled shoulder happened in the process."

Isaac and Jenna looked at each other and then walked over to the canyon. The scene resembled Torin's story perfectly, right along to the dead steed on the large platform in the distant plains.

"That explains that circular hole I saw earlier," Isaac said to himself.

"What?" Jenna asked him.

"I saw a pile of rocks fall into a circular hole while you were healing Torin. I even saw a wolf crawl from under a large boulder."

"It was still alive?" Jenna asked in amazement.

"It wasn't for long," he assured her.

The two took in the scene knowing fully well that only one child they knew could of been responsible for it.

"Adrian," Isaac concluded.

"But how?" Jenna said in disbelief. "He hates using psynergy. And from what Torin described, the work done here would of taken a master adept to accomplish. It had to have been another boy..."

Isaac turned to Torin who standing alone behind them. "Torin," he called to him, "do you remember what the boy looked like?"

"It was too dark to see anything specific," Torin answered him. "But I do remember the long black hair."

Jenna and Isaac looked into each others eyes in wonder. Every sign indicated that Adrian had done this amazing feat of psynergy; the obvious ability of an earth adept displayed by the stone platforms, Adrian running into their room out of breath to inform them of Torin's condition, the long black hair...all of it pointed to their son.

"Could of Felix taught him this?" Jenna asked

"I don't know," Isaac answered, "probably not though."

The two contemplated about the numerous farfetched possibilities, but always eventually disregarded them as illogical. All they could do was wait until Adrian woke up. They could ask Felix if he was in anyway responsible for Adrian's ability, but somehow Isaac knew that was almost as illogical as their original contemplations.

Jenna and Isaac bid Torin farewell and arranged that they would meet again in the morning Questions were racing inside the couple's minds as they walked back to the inn in the still of the night. They needed to get to Lemuria and they needed to get there fast. It would be there and only there that they would receive the answers they desired.

For there was something about Adrian.

***Chapter 5*: Alex**

Disclaimer: Yawn...I don't own Golden Sun or any of the characters.

Chapter V

- Alex -

The sky was taking in the colors of the four elemental beacons more rapidly now. Alex could almost see each beam emitted by the lighthouses closing in at the peak of Mt. Aleph where if he did not hurry, he would miss the time of the elemental conjunction, the rise of the golden sun, his call to infinite power.

His arms were aching from the strenuous climb over Mt. Aleph's unforgiving cliffs and his stamina was quickly running out.

"Only...a few more...feet!" Alex huffed as he reached for the next crack in the rock that would give him the support he needed to lift himself upward. "Immortality is just...a few more...feet away!"

A deafening hum pierced Alex's ears as he saw the first of the four beams wrap its magnificent tail around Mt. Aleph's peak. He lost his grip in one hand as the second beam passed only inches away from his face and conjoined with the first. His natural human strength was gone and he could feel his remaining hand slipping as he hung there suspended beneath his destination.

"I will not let this mountain get in my way!" Alex shouted as he swung his body around to get a firm grip with his loose

hand. The third beam flew by him and finally his adrenaline kicked in. With one desperate concentration of arm power, he launched himself upward to grab hold of the edge where he slowly lifted his body onto the flat surface of Mt. Aleph's summit. Alex stood up and laughed as he lifted his hands skyward awaiting for the final mergence of the remaining elemental beam. Mere seconds later, the final beam joined with the others and as they intertwined and danced around the mountain, a golden light began to surround Alex. Soon all he could see was the glow of the *golden sun*.

"Alchemy!" Alex screamed madly. "The time has come for you to embrace your master!"

"Alchemy will never bow down to you, Alex," a voice thundered from above.

The crazed young man looked up to see a one-eyed monster float slowly down beside him. "Who...."

"I am the Wise One," the mysterious being answered him.

Alex smiled in recognition. "Ah yes, I remember you. You must be the guardian of Vale who interfered with my operation to steal the elemental stars from the Sol Sanctum," he said almost in a snicker. "I must apologize for your inevitable failure in preventing me from attaining the power of the ages."

"This power that you speak of will never be yours," The Wise One informed him.

"Speak of?" Alex said in surprise, "I just got it. Eternal life, endless power, it is all mine now."

Alex turned his back to the Wise One and raised his hands once more. "Nature is now under my dominion, Wise One

and I will show you just how mistaken you are. Storms upon Vale! Let them be the first to see me display what true power really is!"

Alex laughed and raised his hands even higher as he waited a few seconds for something to happen. He was not greeted with storms or cataclysms, but by utter silence.

"Even though your power has greatly increased by absorbing the light of your *golden sun*," the Wise one said, "you still retain significant boundaries...just like every other human being."

"You're wrong," Alex laughed in disbelief still raising his hands waiting for the first lightning bolt to strike the town below him.

"Your psynergy may be a little bit stronger," the Wise One continued, "and your life is almost endless, but nevertheless Alex, you are not omnipotent."

Alex's fury was reaching its climax as he lowered his hands and faced the Wise One. "Then maybe I will just have to make due with what I've got," he said staring maliciously into the stone cyclops's massive eye.

"You will fail in my opposition, Alex," The Wise One told him, "and you will fail in the opposition of all those whom you are trying to oppress."

"Mere superstition Wise One, again you are mistaken," Alex casually informed him. "I have no desire to oppress anybody. I just want the power...the possibility."

"Power ultimately corrupts those who behold it," The Wise One said. "And no matter what your intentions are Alex, its beckoning possibility will only grow more provocative. An

eternity lived by such repressed indulgence is the looming gateway to certain death. You can't escape it Alex, no one can. And as long as you retain your mortality, I urge you to be content."

"But I am already *immortal!*" Alex screamed echoing his fury across the sky. "All the lighthouses were lit, all the beams converged upon Mt. Aleph's summit, I was here before they all formed the golden sun, I should be...."

Alex paused to consider the missing variable causing the string of his unfortunate events. The Wise One continued to point his cold one-eyed stare in his direction as if waiting to feast upon the realization of his folly.

"I should be...," Alex repeated lost in his thoughts and his doubts.

"I saw the golden..."

"I got the..."

"The stone.....no..."

"So you finally understand?" the Wise One asked.

"The Stone of the Sages," Alex murmured slowly. "It didn't appear."

"Correct," The Wise One said confirming Alex's tragic suspicions. "The golden sun you thought to have experienced was not the golden sun at all, but merely a fabricated concentration of the four elemental beams combined. The energy released from the anomaly happened to increase your power, but it did not give you immortality. That can only be granted by the Stone of the Sages."

"Then where is it?" Alex shrieked. "All the legends say that when the four lighthouses are lit, a golden sun will arise that will mark the formation of the Stone of the Sages. If what I just experienced wasn't the golden sun, then when will the real one occur?"

"I believe a human phrase can best fit an appropriate answer to that question," The Wise One replied. "And If I'm not mistaken, I think it goes along the lines of, that's for me to know and for you to find out."

"Ha ha ha. Witty, very witty," Alex said without any sign of amusement on his face. "But I grow tired of your insolence and since you have proved that you are not a friend to my cause, you are simply my *enemy*. Prepare to meet your doom."

Alex's fury was well over boiling point now so it would only be appropriate for him to attack with water at a similar temperature. As the steaming water materialized from his hands, they launched a volley of powerful gushes that would of knocked any normal man unconscious, none the less burn through their skin at the temperature Alex was using. But as he soon found out, the Wise One was no normal being. The guardian simply shrugged off the attack before completely focusing his eye on his opponent.

"*Enough!*" the Wise One bellowed as almost instantaneously the earth shook violently from underneath the mountain. Alex lost his balance and fell head first into the hard rock.

"The mountain is going to be destroyed by the energy released from the elemental conjunction," the Wise One thundered. "I suggest you get up and flee!"

"Flee?" Alex moaned, "I can barely stand...and my head." He managed to feel his forehead which was split open in the top

right.

"Ah," The Wise One inquired. "So now you see the limits of your power? If you do not get up, the mountain will most certainly bury you beneath the depths of the earth. You might not survive and thus you will experience the limits of your life as well."

A long moment passed as Alex stared into his opponent's seemingly ever watchful eye. He would remember that final gaze as long as he lived. He would somehow avenge this battle and defeat that earthen monstrosity.

The Stone of the Sages will be mine, Alex swore to himself.

And then the mountain crumbled...

***Chapter 6*: Two Awakenings**

Reviews:

Master of Reality- Yeah, the stone of the sages is probably the biggest thing that bugged me about the ending in the Lost Age. I mean, in Golden Sun 1, Kraden ranted and ranted all about it. But I have given it some thought and its insertion into my story will hopefully leave you satisfied.

Disclaimer: Maybe I should get a muse to take care of this part. Nah, I never understood why people used them in the first place. So I guess I retain the honor of joyfully exclaiming that I do not own Golden Sun....or any of it characters.

Chapter VI

- Two Awakenings -

All through the night Adrian's body was stirring and streaming with sweat. When he awoke his hair felt like that of a house mop that had just finished soaking in the scum off the clean floor. His clothes were reduced to nothing more than wet garments boating the stench of a farm animal and to top it all off, his back was aching from his sword that he had forgotten to take off before he fell asleep. The dawn came quickly and harshly as Adrian's eyes blurred behind his closed eyelids. When he finally opened them, he saw his parents and his uncle busy packing their things. Felix noticed Adrian's awakening first.

"Good morning Adrian," he said mounting his scabbard on his back.

Adrian nodded and averted his gaze to his parents, whose eyes were already intently looking in his direction.

"How did you sleep?" Jenna asked him.

"Fine," Adrian answered.

"Your clothes suggest otherwise," Isaac told his son. "You will need to bathe in the river outside of town before we embark any further."

"I agree," Felix said. "I can't imagine which is worse; death by sword, or death by stench."

"Felix!" Jenna scolded, "Adrian has been having nightmares, leave the boy alone."

"He was just joking Mother," Adrian assured her. "And besides, I probably do smell bad. Maybe even almost as bad as when you and Uncle Felix rolled around in the fertilizer right before we left New Vale."

Jenna blushed while Felix gave a little chuckle.

"Nevertheless," Felix said regaining his composure, "your father's suggestion would benefit us all."

Felix then paused and looked as if he was pondering up the insight of the ages as he rested his chin on his fist.

"On second thought," he resolved, "if Adrian didn't go to the river, we wouldn't have to worry about monster attacks ever again. No creature in all of Weyard would be foolish enough to come within even twenty leagues of his awful..."

"That's enough," Jenna interrupted him. "We all are aware of Adrian's...aroma, but how about we do something about it instead of merely embarrassing him. Felix, since you seem

the most opinionated about the situation, I think you would be the perfect candidate to take Adrian to the river, right now."

"You heard *Lady Jenna*," Isaac urged to Felix as he caught his wife blush yet again. "Off with you two! We have business to attend to with the soldier before we go anyway. We'll meet up with you at the river in a couple hours."

Felix turned to Adrian. "Somehow that didn't work out the way I wanted it to."

Adrian simply smiled and shrugged. The two then left the room and headed for the river, leaving Isaac and Jenna alone together for the first time since the eve of the journey.

Isaac approached Jenna and parted some of the hair that was covering her eyes. Over all the years of aging and change, Isaac noticed that her face had never lost it's youthful radiance; her simple beauty never faltering from shining through her lush and passionate brown eyes. But lately, the sparkle that so clearly defined her complexion was being eclipsed by something. A burden, Isaac knew, but the extent of it was disturbingly unclear to him. He vowed to himself that he would find out.

"What is troubling you, love?" he whispered to her grasping both of her hands.

"Nothing, Isaac," she answered him. "I'm just a little eager to get going."

"As am I," he replied, "but is that it?"

Jenna gripped his hands a little tighter with hers. She then looked into Isaac's pleading face, but slowly averted her gaze to the floor. "Everything will be fine once we confirm

whether or not Adrian was responsible for the canyon," she said. "The sooner we find out, the sooner my heart can find refuge."

"How will you find peace from what we learn about Adrian?" Isaac asked her.

"Not peace Isaac, refuge. And a temporary one at that. As long as the threat of alchemy haunts Weyard and my children are still living in it, I will never be at peace," Jenna said now looking directly into her husband's eyes.

"And Adrian?" he repeated. Jenna slowly inhaled as she tried to gather the thoughts that had for so long been strictly emotion and instinct. The transformation deemed very difficult for her as she tried to think about all the possible words to describe the sole feeling that was screaming in her soul and her mind.

"Isaac," she began, "in my heart I know that the canyon was the work of our son. I have no doubt anymore for I have learned that doubt is the product of fear and fear is what I wish to part with. The reason in which I longed for Adrian not to be responsible for the canyon was because to have such power would mean for him to have great enemies in the future."

"That's not necessarily true," Isaac assured her. "I've read of many great kings who have lived their entire reigns without a single war."

"But Adrian is no king," Jenna reasoned. "He is a boy who is entering a world *already* on the fringes of chaos. With his heart I know he will rally against opposing conflict and if his power is genuine, he will fight with courage and he will *triumph*. It is for this that I worry for him because the triumph of good is always met with the retaliation of evil. It

is the sad way of things, and it is an ensuing circle that I do not want Adrian to be a part of."

"But Jenna," Isaac pleaded, "Adrian is already a part of this encompassing cycle, as are the rest of us. This circle that you speak of is the very framework of human existence and no matter how hard we try, we do not have the power to choose whether or not we participate in it. The beauty of this circle is that *it* immerses *us* into life's endless flood of possibility and allows us to embrace the path of our choosing. If anything Jenna, take refuge in the fact that Adrian chose to use his power to defend a helpless foal against the slaughter of the strong. As far as I'm concerned, Adrian has chosen sides in this battle and has made an honorable stand to reinforce his decision. Take refuge Jenna, that no matter what happens to our son in the future, that this day he made his choice to fight and strive for the ways of goodness and virtue. His future now lies in his own hands; our work with Adrian is done."

The world as Jenna knew for twelve years was beginning to blur and blossom with a light that gave her warmth and an undying calm of which she had almost forgotten. Her face lifted and Isaac beamed in recognition of the sparkle that had laid dormant for far too long. The worry that had once dominated the very essence of her present being had now dispersed. She was herself again.

"But we will never falter from supporting him," Jenna said assertively.

"Of course," Isaac replied. "To Lemuria then!"

Felix and Adrian returned from the river to find Isaac and Jenna conversing with a tall and built man wearing the

apparel of a soldier just outside the inn doors.

"That must be the soldier your parents were talking about last night," concluded Felix. Adrian's stomach lurched as he put together the features of the man before him with his recollections from the previous night. This was the man that had witnessed him slaughter an entire pack of wolves. Apparently the soldier must have recognized Adrian as well for immediately after taking one glance of the boy he nodded to Isaac and Jenna.

"You must be the young magician," the soldier commented, "or eh, the adept as I come to understand. My name is Torin."

"Nice to meet you Torin," the boy replied, "I'm Adrian."

The two shook hands like two people who already been introduced by the hand of some pre-destined encounter that in a way had already binded the two together well before they had formally met. For Adrian, Torin represented the epitome of his malevolent actions taken with the wolves, essentially the pure essence of the potential evil he was capable of. Likewise for Torin, Adrian was the gateway to his understanding of a world so unreal and fantastic that to deny it's existence would be to deny life itself; to not pursue these newfound mysteries, would be for him to isolate all the wonders of Weyard and place them desolately inside of a cage.

Little however did these two know that this meeting marked the beginning of an interdependent relationship that would forge each of their separate lines of destiny into one intricate twist of fate. But this was not to come in the sleepy town of Vault, or in any of the destinations included in Adrian and his family's quest. So for the present being, the two merely exchanged greetings, and parted shortly after.

"Alex," a distant and ethereal voice called. "Alex, you must wake up."

Like an ensuing storm the voice became louder and more pronounced as the words approached his consciousness.
"Alex...Alex."

The voice was that of a woman's and her tender tone soothed his mind. He opened his eyes.

"Alex, we must hurry."

The room was faintly lit and the woman before him was enshrouded in twilight.

"Mother?" Alex said rubbing his eyes.

"Get up young one, your father and sisters are waiting at the port."

"Why?" Alex asked her. "Is something wrong?"

"Alex, please just get your things, we must go now."

"Mother, what's wrong? Mother!" The woman vanished as the front door blew open by a screaming gust of wind. Alex jumped out of his bed and ran outside.

"Alex," the woman called reappearing at the side of the road. "Alex, the war has begun, we must flee this place!"

"Mother!" Alex wailed as he rushed to her side.

"Take my hand Alex and hold on tight."

"I won't let go, Mother. I won't let go."

The road was filled with frightened families all heading for the nearest port while storm clouds gathered in the east to meet them.

"Where will we go after we reach the port?" Alex asked.

"To the island city of Miliad."

"Will we be safe there?" Alex said clutching his mother's hand a little more tightly.

"Long enough for the ship to be outfitted to cross the falls and to leave this forsaken land."

"Will we ever come back to Gavren?"

"I hope so my child." And a tear fell down her cheek.

They walked for leagues and leagues with countless others trotting ahead and behind them until they finally reached their destination. The port was in chaos. The storm that Alex and his mother had seen brewing in the east had destroyed half the docks. Rain continued to pelt the port and it's inhabitants as fierce winds spawned even fiercer waves that rocked and toppled many outgoing vessels. People were constantly screaming as they were thrown overboard into the fury of the storm waters. Ships were being scorched by stray lightning strikes that were barraging the port. Thunder deafened the ears of everyone.

Someone was shouting, but Alex could not hear what was being said above the noise of the storm. The voice became less distant but still the shouts remained inaudible. And then a man appeared from behind a corner.

"Carina!" the voice shouted again. "Carina!"

"Kent!"

Alex watched as his father and mother embraced. Kent then turned to Alex.

"We must get you to the ship."

"But the storm father," Alex tried to reason. "The ship has probably been destroyed by now."

"My ship is in dry dock right now, son. It is perfectly safe from the storm and your sisters are perfectly safe waiting for you. We must make haste though."

The scene then changed from the flooding streets to the dry dock. Alex and his parents approached the boarding ramp as his sisters waved from the deck of the ship. Alex stepped off the ramp and ran to his sisters. He then turned around to see his parents motionless.

"Mother, Father, don't we have to go now?" Alex urged them.

"We are not going with you, son."

Alex's heart began to beat furiously with fear. His sisters began to cry.

"Why...why are you not coming with us?" Alex questioned. Carina was the first to answer.

"Because your father must stay and fight, and I will not leave his side."

"But, what about us?" one of his sisters cried. "Who will take care of us?" A man then repelled down the mast and landed on the deck next to the girls.

"The pirate Deadbeard will take you to Miliad," Kent told them. "He is a good man and he can protect you from the other pirates marauding the waters."

"They'll be safe with me," the man said in a burly voice. "I'll get them across the falls."

"Momma I'm scared," Alex said as he rushed to Carina and threw his arms around her

"You must be strong, my child. Take care of your sisters." Kent and the girls joined the two for one last embrace, and then the scene changed once again.

The storm was even more devastating out in the open sea as the boat rocked and creaked along the crashing waves. Water was cascading Alex's face as his tears flowed freely. His sisters were below deck but he could not bring himself to stop gazing westward at the port even though it was well out of view.

"Alex!" the pirate Deadbeard shouted above the thunderous storm. "You must get yourself below decks! The waves'll throw ya overboard and then that'll be the last of you! Alex!"

Alex looked at Deadbeard's pleading glances, but then slowly turned his head back to continue his westward gaze. And then he found himself in the port city of Miliad.

"Come me boy!" Deadbeard beckoned. "The ship is ready for departure!"

Alex stepped on to the newly outfitted boat. From the deck he could spot several other vessels similarly equipped leaving their docks and heading for the falls. His father's ship began to accelerate and in no time at all the ship approached the Great Cascades. Alex watched in awe as

dozens of ships lifted off the water and soared into the sanctuary of the clouds. His heart skipped a beat as his own ship levitated above the falls and began its journey across the great expanse. As Alex and the pirate Deadbeard flew farther and farther away from Gavren, the rain barraging Alex's face was replaced by gentle gales caressing his body. But this time of relative comfort was swiftly replaced by unspeakable horror. The sky began raining fire as masses of all shapes and sizes bombarded the many ships traveling the great expanse. Alex watched as a ship erupted into flames and shredded into pieces as a large flaming rock struck the main deck.

"Meteors," Deadbeard said sullenly. "It appears even the spirits rally against us."

One by one Alex witnessed the destruction of the flying ships by the hand of the falling inferno. A vessel in close proximity to Alex's ship was struck hard by a small meteorite to the right wing. The crew screamed in agony as the ship plummeted hopelessly to the depths of the unknown. Alex watched them fall until he could no longer see them.

Only three ships including Alex's remained airborne as the meteor shower continued to cast its death spell upon the people of Gavren. When the meteorites finally seemed to stop falling, Alex looked up to see hundreds of meteors as large as mountains crashing furiously against each other as they made their way to meet the three lone ships struggling to survive the mighty onslaught. As the giant behemoths gained upon them, the uppermost ship was crushed into oblivion as two meteors collided into it. The two remaining vessels dived frantically to put some distance between them and the rocks.

"We are never going to be able outrun them!" Alex exclaimed to the pirate.

"Then what do ya expect me to about it, laddie?"

"How much psynergy do you have left?" Alex asked him.

"Enough to carry this ship from the east end to the west end of Gavren if I have to. Why do ya ask?"

"Because the only way we are going to survive this is if we can get these meteors off our backs." Right as Alex said this the other ship a couple hundred feet above them burst into shreds as the starboard side of the hull scraped against a gaining meteor.

"And how to ya intend to do that young lad?"

"Well," Alex contemplated, "it's obvious that we can't outrun them going down as we've witnessed with that last ship. But maybe we might just be able to have those meteors pass us by...by going up."

Deadbeard chuckled. "Are ya serious?"

"It's the only way," Alex shrugged.

"Well then!" the pirate exclaimed. "Let's see if me psynergy can hold through a vertical ascent." The ship then pulled up from it's nose dive and began to ascend toward certain death.

"Ya know lad, the success of this escapade depends solely on the chance of an opening from these fast colliding monstrosities."

"Better to face death head on than to be taken from behind," Alex reasoned.

Deadbeard bellowed in laughter. "Right ya are mate, right ya are."

The ship drew closer and closer to the falling mountains but a safe route through the masses refused to reveal itself. Alex then noticed two extremely large meteors edging toward each other a little left of their current flight path.

"Head toward those two big ones!" Alex ordered.

"Don't ya worry laddie, I see them too."

As the ship ascended dangerously close to the meteor field, the two giant masses finally collided but grinded together instead of repelling each other.

"Alex, we're going to have find a different way!"

"Wait for it..."

"Alex!"

"Just wait!" Alex urged.

Sure enough the grinding began to die down and the masses started to diverge.

"Take it!" Alex shouted. Deadbeard mustered up all the remaining psynergy he had to speed the ship through the gap before another meteor could hit one of the two diverging ones. But his fears were confirmed as the two rocks began to converge again as the ship was only half way through the opening.

"It's going to be a bit tight lad, so hold on!"

"We aren't going to make it!" Alex screamed.

"Oh yes we will," the pirate assured him as he searched within his mind for the psynergy reserves needed to give this ship the agility necessary to make it through that opening. In one last burst of speed the ship zoomed through the opening as the dorsal balcony of the ship crunched between the two meteor's mighty fists.

Alex and the pirate cheered as they looked back upon the obstacle well behind them. Their joy however was short-lived as they faced what newly lied in plain view. The opening in which Alex thought would permit their survival instead turned out to be a passageway leading further into harm's way. All of the small burning meteorites that had seemed to stopped falling were falling once again.

"When the big ones started coming, the small ones must of been blocked off and trapped in here," Deadbeard concluded after assessing the scene. Almost immediately after he finished a meteorite the size of small fist slammed into the crow's nest causing it to burst into burning shreds.

"We're not going to last much longer in here lad," Deadbeard commented turning his head to the boy beside him. "Alex?"

Alex could see the pirate's mouth moving but the words he heard were all a jumble. His thoughts became hazy as images of a million little fiery instruments of death flinging their way toward him engulfed his consciousness. He collapsed and saw a misty perception of Deadbeard rushing to his side. Alex's eyes began to close but were startled open by another small meteorite crashing down onto the deck. He rolled to his side and vomited. Deadbeard jumped back and got up to continue navigating. Alex watched the psynergy tapped pirate struggle to pilot the ship around the

thousands of bombarding rock particles. A larger meteorite then hit the mast dead on. Alex didn't see where the mast fell for by the time this had happened, his grip on consciousness was gone.

Alex felt himself leave his body and float above the scene to survey it with his own eyes. His adolescent body sprawled out upon the deck nauseated by fear of death, the pirate Deadbeard engaging in piloting a psynergy-flown vessel at the brink of exhaustion, his two sisters below decks crying and not knowing what was going on or why their parents had abandoned them, and lastly the descending inferno that threatened to destroy all that Alex saw before him, all, danced freely in Alex's mind as the never-ending nightmare refused to recede.

But then it did begin to recede. First, Alex watched as his adolescent body vanished, followed then by Deadbeard's. Then, the fiery meteorites disappeared one by one and soon the entire sky dissipated into a vast expanse of darkness soon to enshroud the ship holding Alex's two sisters in shadows.

And then all was black. But the nightmare wasn't over. Alex was still there looking at nothing, feeling nothing, and hearing nothing. But not for long...

"ALEX!" a voice boomed and echoed through the darkness.

"Who's there?" Alex asked startled looking frantically around him. There was silence for a few seconds, but was soon broken by Alex's screams as a huge white eye opened up and focused upon him.

"As long as you retain your mortality Alex, I urge you to be content," the voice boomed. Alex then recognized the

speaker by the familiar words spoken upon the summit of Mt. Aleph.

"Wise One!" Alex shouted furiously. "Why don't you leave me be!"

"As long as you still wish to disrupt the balance of power in Weyard you will never be out of my sight."

"But to haunt my dreams like a hooded specter?" Alex asked him. "This is madness even for spirit like yourself!"

"Nonsense," The Wise One refuted. "Dreams are what drive the souls of men. I am hoping my intervention within yours will give you a certain rationality when you awaken."

"Your efforts are valiant noble guardian," Alex said mockingly, "but rationality is not what I lack. I fear you fail to understand the qualities of which I do possess, such as ambition greater than that of the mightiest conqueror, that of dedication more sure than the coming season of spring after a winter frost, and a will so engrained in the very heart, mind, and soul of my being that no weapon ever forged unless sharpened with fate itself could ever tear it away from me."

The Wise One remained silent as his earthen eyelid began to descend. The light radiating from his gaze became dimmer as Alex watched in triumph as the Wise One seemingly retreated in his efforts to redeem him.

"Awaken Alex," he said almost in a whisper. "Much time has passed since the destruction of Mt. Aleph. I urge you to rethink your ambitions and weigh the consequences for your actions. I will observe your dreams with interest." And with that, his eye completely shut and the utter darkness returned.

Alex awoke in a massive sweat. He opened his eyes to see rocks and debris from Mt. Aleph scattered all around and on his body. As his eyes adjusted to the relative darkness of where he was, he discovered a large boulder lying on top of his upper legs. He couldn't see or feel his legs and arms, but he was pleased to find out that his arms were merely asleep as he momentarily regained control. Alex felt immensely weak but he mustered enough strength to push aside the boulder. He screamed in pain as the rock rolled off to reveal his legs completely smashed and mutilated. He quickly used his psynergy to begin healing the wound, and in seconds the bones that had been shattered began to grow again. The open flesh that had decayed and rotted was replaced by healthy new flesh that wrapped around newly grown muscles and ligaments. Alex was standing in minutes, only to fall from the weakness he felt in his entire body. Lying on the ground he surveyed the space around him and cursed as he realized he was surrounded by piles of massive boulders.

But without another word, Alex clenched his teeth, got up and began digging.

***Chapter 7*: Unexpected Encounter**

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Chapter VII

- Unexpected Encounter -

The journey to Kalay was uneventful, but as it was among one of Adrian's firsts, the two-day trek seemed to particularly drag as the boy walked and walked without any sign of a town. To make matters worse, he *knew* that there wouldn't be any signs of civilization for a long while since his father had mentioned that they were going to have to make camp midway. But by midnight when Isaac finally said they could make camp, Adrian didn't care how long they had been walking anymore. He simply just found the closest tree and patch of grass and fell asleep exhausted.

He awoke to his uncle badgering him to get up. His body still weak and tired indicated to him that he had been given a poor excuse for a good night's rest. Sure enough, the sun had not risen yet and Adrian guessed that he had only rested for six hours max. But despite his rampant groans and complaints, they were on the road again soon to arrive at Kalay later that day.

The thrill that Adrian had felt when they first departed New Vale's gates was slowly beginning to wane as the sun reached it's uppermost position in the sky and Kalay was nowhere to be seen. He was sick of walking and if a monster or something didn't show up soon, he just knew he would die of boredom. But as dusk approached so did Kalay and the party soon found themselves finally at the doors of the town inn.

"Finally," Adrian remarked quite annoyed with adventuring by now.

"I'm looking forward to a full night's rest myself," Jenna said stretching her arms with a yawn.

Once Isaac gave the innkeeper eight copper doubloons the four immediately made their way toward their room.

"Should we visit your friend Hammet before we head for the boat tomorrow?" Jenna asked addressing Isaac having heard only stories of the man from Isaac's quest with Ivan, Garet, and Mia.

"The innkeeper told me he's out on business," he answered her. "He won't be back till later tomorrow."

"And we'll be well on our way across the Karagol Sea by then," Felix finished. Adrian who had flopped himself on one of the beds jumped up with a start.

"We'll be going on a boat tomorrow?" he questioned excitedly.

"Yes," Isaac said dryly. "I would prefer the northern land passage but a ship will give us a speedier and more direct route to Tolbi."

"Do you think we should reserve our tickets for tomorrow?" Jenna asked. "Colosso is next month and the die-hard fans are probably booking cabins by now. Waiting till tomorrow could prove to be a mistake."

"Jenna's right," Felix said. "Anyway, I for one would like to be on the water again. We do have a long ocean journey ahead of us and this short trip would most certainly prepare our

stomachs for the sea. More importantly we can't afford to miss the boat and waste time walking the northern route."

Listening to the two advocating for reservations left Isaac no choice but to agree. So he headed to Kalay docks to book the morning departure while everybody else slept in anticipation for the upcoming morning, Adrian more than the others of course.

Their anticipation the next morning was bolstered by the atmosphere in which the vessel greeted them. Dozens of excited travelers stood in line waiting for the captain to lower the boarding ramp while they chatted pleasantly with one other. Adrian could not help but hearing some of the conversations circulating among the passengers. One group of men talked intensely on the finer points of swordplay while a distant group of women shot disapproving glances at them. One of the women motioned cautiously for the rest of them to come closer.

"Harold even plans to enter the Trials this year!" she said with a tone of utmost disgust as the rest of the women nodded their heads in agreement. "'Tis a barbaric event if you ask me but maybe if I'm lucky, Harold might get 'is legs chopped of in the process and realize his place is at home with his wife and children as a father and not as some feather-brained warrior bloke."

The ladies giggled as the woman continued. "If it wasn't for that bloody raffle Kalay started, Harold wouldn't of even thought about going to Colosso in the first place. Alas, 'tis a sad thing when fortune finally smiles on you and it ends up doing more bad than good."

"A raffle?" Adrian questioned to himself and then to Isaac.

"Yes, a raffle," he confirmed. "Just one of those signs that a city is flourishing."

"How?" Adrian asked not seeing the connection.

"As you know, Master Hammet is a wealthy merchant so he can afford spontaneous gifts to the town residents," Isaac said gazing at the sea beyond the dock. "A ticket to Colosso is probably nothing to him, but to his subjects his gesture displays an interest in keeping a pleasant vibrancy in the town."

"And if you haven't noticed already," Felix said pointing to the groups of laughing men and women, "Kalay has some of the most jovial and boisterous people around."

"It's not just by chance either," Jenna chimed in. "Hammet has worked hard to make the lives of his subjects comfortable yet still engaging. He's a genuinely good ruler."

With their words said about Hammet, Adrian turned back to face the boarding ramp but before he could, he noticed two strange figures approaching the dock. One was massive and muscular with fiery red hair while the other stood significantly leaner and instead had light purple hair. Adrian gave them a quick double take but returned his attention to the boarding ramp that was finally being lowered. Isaac saw the two approaching and immediately recognized them for the warriors he had met on his last voyage across the Karagol almost thirteen years ago. He could not remember their names for the life of him so he decided not to address them. To his relief the two strode past him without even giving him a glance as they headed to the harbormaster in front of the boat. Adrian watched as his father's eyes followed the two men up the line of people and then gestured a thumb and a finger pointing to them and his ear.

Isaac opened his mouth and was about to scold his son for wanting to eavesdrop intentionally, but he realized that he was curious himself. Isaac gave an almost undetectable nod as Adrian smiled mischievously and turned to get closer to the three men.

"Look for the last time we don't need you anymore!" the harbormaster snapped.

"But we've protected this vessel for thirteen years!" the man with fiery red hair said pleadingly.

Unlike his companion, the light purple-haired man was calm and was staring at the harbormaster with an emotionless expression.

"And we appreciate your dedication greatly but your services are no longer needed!"

"Appreciate our dedication?!" the muscular man roared. "We have risked our necks to fight off the Karagol's monsters to make sure this ship gets for here to Tolbi time after time again!"

"Calm down Ouranos," the purple-haired man said speaking for the first time. "Our friend is quite right. Our services are no longer needed."

Ouranos raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"As you know Ouranos, monsters have not attacked any outgoing and incoming ships here on the Karagol for two years. Correct?"

The big man hesitated and then nodded his head uneasily.

"Do you remember what happened two years ago Ouranos?" his companion asked.

The large man thought for a moment and then answered excitedly. "Yeah, yeah. I remember Sean. We killed that enormous Kraken! It was almost as big as the ship it was. And..."

"Thank you Ouranos, that will do. You remember that incident, don't you Gern," Sean asked coolly addressing the harbormaster. He slowly nodded but prepared to fire a frustrated rebuttal.

"And do you remember Ouranos," he said quickly preventing Gern from interrupting his thoughts, "the monster attack after we defeated that Kraken?"

Ouranos thought long and hard but a blank face was all that emanated from him. "That's funny," he said confused. "I don't remember any more after that."

"Exactly," Sean remarked in a very placid tone. "I think it's safe to assume Gern that we were directly responsible for stopping monster attacks on the Karagol Sea after we killed that giant Kraken."

Gern had no answer to this so Sean kept on talking. "Me and *Ouranos* here," he said putting an accent on his companion's name, "don't think it's fair that after all our services to this town and your vessel, we are simply cast out like unwanted junk. Me and *Ouranos* are still capable of killing any monster or anything that gets in our way with relative ease."

Adrian then understood what Sean was doing. By saying his companion's name so frequently and at the latter part of his speech so menacingly, he was slowly but surely invoking

fear in Gern for the massive Ouranos. Gern was already showing signs of uneasiness as Ouranos began to grin at him maliciously while indiscreetly flexing his massive muscles.

"Look Sean," the harbormaster said with an almost trembling voice, "money isn't as plentiful as it used to and with the city lowering our funding we have to make certain decisions to ensure the continuation of our service. Personnel cuts is just one of those precautionary decisions we had to make, starting with the unneeded positions. I'm sorry gentlemen."

Gern began to turn away, his eyes on Ouranos the entire motion.

"Gern!" Sean shouted.

He slowly turned around bearing a face of growing dread.

"You can at least grant us one last complimentary trip to Tolbi, can't you?"

Gern stared at Sean and then nodded his once. "Yes, yes of course. But you and Ouranos must stay on deck because all the cabins are full."

Sean nodded and bowed his head slightly. Ouranos simply gave a satisfied grunt.

The passengers began to board the ship as Adrian returned to Isaac's side to relay the conversation.

"Low on funding?" Isaac said aghast. "That's impossible."

"That's what the harbor master said," Adrian assured him.

"What's impossible?" Jenna asked Felix trailing.

"Apparently Kalay is low on funds and had to lay off a couple warriors who had been working for the ship service."

"I thought Hammet was one of the wealthiest merchants around," Felix said raising an eyebrow.

"He is....," Isaac replied quickly. "Or he was...oh I don't know."

"Isaac," Jenna said putting a consoling hand on to her husband's shoulder, "we really don't have time to worry about this."

"I know, I know," he said slightly dumbfounded. "We have to save the world first and blah blah blah blah blah."

"Actually," she said picking up her pack, "we need to get on the ship first because we are the only ones still standing on the dock."

Adrian looked around and sure enough Jenna was right. He also noticed that the harbormaster was throwing dirty looks at his parents as he urgently pointed to the boarding ramp. Jenna shot Isaac a smile.

"Well then," Isaac said smiling back. "First thing's first."

The four boarded the ship and before they could even reach their cabin, the ship was already in motion. The vessel was considerably bigger than Isaac had remembered it from his last voyage, this ship consisting of three levels compared to the earlier model which only had two. Adrian walked along the corridors of the middle deck past each of the passenger cabins and headed toward the stair well leading the bottom most level of the ship. A burly sailor stood guard in front of the entrance and crossed his arms as Adrian approached.

"Unless you want to help row the ship," the sailor said mockingly, "you are not allowed beyond this point."

Adrian who was feeling rather mischievous at the time decided to continue the conversation further.

"Actually," he replied sarcastically, "that's exactly what I'm here for. So if you could so kindly step aside I'll get right to..."

"Ah get lost kid," the sailor interrupted angrily.

Adrian turned back around as he tried desperately to contain his laughter. Thwarted from exploring the lower rowing levels, he decided instead to go up top for some fresh air. The ship was at full speed now as the sails picked up a westward gaze increasing their velocity by almost two fold. Adrian could not think of a better feeling then what he was experiencing now; the wind, the water, and the destination in which they were heading all molding together to form an intoxicating excitement flowing freely within his body.

An hour later the ship traveled at a normal rowing pace since the wind had long since died down. People had come and gone all hoping for a glimpse of land only to retreat back into their cabins. Adrian didn't mind too much that he couldn't see anything but water in every direction, but he was starting to get a little annoyed with the constant rocking and swaying. A passenger near Adrian was apparently in mutual agreement with him because he would occasionally throw his head over the railing and vomit. Adrian gave a slight chuckle and began thinking about when he would attempt to work with the Venus Parchment his brother had given to him. But then he saw it.

A small figure was steadily growing larger across the horizon at a frightening pace. Adrian felt his stomach lurch as fear

flooded through him. In an instant he ran toward the stairs and headed toward his parents and Felix's cabin. As he reached the middle deck he could hear a loud shout echo from behind him.

"Monster! All passengers to their cabins and all available personnel to the deck! Monster!"

Before Adrian could reach the door his parents and Felix were already running out. Felix had his Sol Blade unsheathed, Jenna clutched her staff, while Isaac stood with his sword still tucked securely in his scabbard.

"Stay here Adrian," Isaac ordered.

"No way!" he replied angrily. "That thing looked huge and this ship will need all the help it can get!"

"I don't have time for this," Isaac muttered under his breath as he grabbed Adrian by the shirt and threw him on one of the cabin beds. "Adrian, I'm serious. You will stay here or you will remain in this cabin for the rest of the voyage."

"But...", Adrian began, but Isaac had already slammed the door behind him.

The three ran to the deck to be met by a handful of awestruck sailors along with Ouranos and Sean each brandishing their own weapon. Each and every one of their gazes was pointing west where an enormous figure towered over them. Felix and Jenna looked at each other and then back to the monster. The figure was half submerged under water yet it still managed to rival the perch upon the crow's nest almost fifty feet above the ship. It's skin was of the color of human flesh, and it's head stared back at the people of the ship with piercing aqua blue eyes. The face was covered in white hair and in the monster's muscular hands

was a massive golden trident. The figure moved forward and its dorsal fins were exposed propelling it forward.

"Poseidon," Felix gravely said in recognition of the monster.

"But...," Jenna said in a weak voice, "didn't we...isn't it..."

"Yes," Felix simply answered.

Isaac looked perturbed and probed each of the two's faces for information. "Okay, what's going on here," he said frustrated. But before either one of them could explain, a booming voice sounded resonating with anger and strength.

"FELIX!"

"I guess I'll soon find out," Isaac said finally unsheathing his sword from his scabbard.

"I am Poseidon, spirit guardian of the seas and foremost the protector of the ancient Lemurian race. Ever since our last encounter, Felix I have sworn to hunt you down to make you pay for the misfortune you have so foolishly bestowed on my people. By forging the evil weapon of the three towers and using it against me you have stripped me of my immortality thus hindering my ability to protect Lemuria. Never have my people had to deal with plundering pirates and foreign peoples trying to instill their culture into ours. Not until you came along. And only by good fortune alone were you able to escape my wrath in the Sea of Time. If you were not accompanied by one of the revered race I have sworn to protect and were sailing any other ship besides the one your friend was binded to, I would have without second thought sent your ship along with it's passengers to the bottom of sea. But you no longer have this advantage and I no longer possess the sanity to contain my vengeance. Prepare to die

Felix, and do so with the knowledge that you were responsible for all who die with you today."

Felix and Isaac had about a split second to react to Poseidon's first attack. An extremely fast gush of water emanated from Poseidon's palm aimed directly at the lower hull. Felix and Isaac responded by simultaneously combining their efforts to create a gravity shield to buffer the water away from the ship. The water blast was indeed powerful, but in the end could not match the combined psynergy of the two adepts.

"I think it's safe to say we were provoked to use force," Isaac remarked candidly.

Felix nodded his head in agreement.

"What can I do?" Jenna asked.

"Save your energy just in case we need healing," Isaac told her. "Me and Felix should be able to take care of him."

Felix didn't share Isaac's confidence because last time he and his party faced Poseidon they were only able to defeat him exclusively because of the mystic Trident, a weapon which had become the weapon of choice for Picard far away in Lemuria. All they could do was try, and if what Poseidon said about his lost immortality was true, they might have a chance.

"Let's give him some spires before he can make another attack!" Felix shouted.

Isaac complied and immediately large earthen shards materialized from their hands flying straight for their adversary's bare chest. Poseidon swung his trident with

terrifying finesse and shattered all the spires with a few powerful swings.

"Our spires were too big of a target!" Isaac yelled to his companion.

"Then let's give him a lot more of the smaller ones!"

Again their earthen volley targeted the exposed chest but like before, Poseidon gracefully shattered all the sharp spires with his swinging trident.

"Our earth synergy is too concentrated!" Isaac said angrily. "He's blocking everything we throw at him."

"My turn," Jenna said pushing aside the two men. Fire synergy was indeed unconcentrated and could not be blocked by Poseidon's current method of defense. But when Jenna shot a large jet of flame toward Poseidon, he lowered his trident and the water all around him encased him in a sphere of liquid. The fire dissipated harmlessly on the shield and when the sphere subsided, Poseidon's menacing gaze was revealed staring maliciously at the three adepts.

"Alright everybody," Isaac shouted. "Attack Poseidon at every part of his body. Fire and spires combined this time!"

Just as ordered, spires and flames erupted from each of the adepts and flew randomly toward Poseidon in all directions. The water sphere Poseidon had used to deflect Jenna's attack again formed but this time crystallized into a thick sphere of solid ice. The spires from Isaac and Felix bounced harmlessly off the ice into pieces while Jenna's flames hopelessly tried to eat away the icy barrier. After a minute of this, the three adepts halted their synergy assaults to see Poseidon's shield virtually unscathed.

"We have to keep trying!" Jenna said pleadingly.

"There's not much else we can do."

"There's just too few of us," whispered Felix.

Poseidon's shield of ice was beginning to steadily glow a blinding white. The sailors on deck were panicking and frightened screams could be heard below from the passenger cabins. The two warriors Sean and Ouranos walked up to the three adepts and stood motionless next to them.

"What is that thing," Sean asked coolly.

Felix was the first to answer. "A spirit gone bad."

"Can it be killed?"

"Of course, but not by the sword from this distance."

"But your sorcery can kill it," Sean said looking directly into Felix's eyes.

Felix returned his gaze suspiciously. "If we could land a hit without him blocking it, yes."

The next sequence of events happened so suddenly that none of the adepts truly realized what was happening beyond their reflexes. The icy sphere, which had been glowing and flashing a blinding light, had exploded into millions of razor sharp ice shards with a deafening crack. Each and every one of the flying particles conjoined and traveled in a deadly stream seemingly depicting a flying serpent. An instant later the shards collided with the mast and plowed through the captain's navigation chamber on the top deck leaving nothing but a heap of shredded wood.

Not losing momentum from the collisions, the ice serpent changed its direction and targeted the three adepts including Sean and Ouranos. Jenna fired a jet of flame while Isaac and Felix again manipulated gravity to put some distance between them and the serpent. But to their horror, the ice particles slowly broke free of the gravity shield while at the same time dodging the jets of flame. The serpent was again advancing menacingly on the adepts. Isaac grabbed Jenna's hand and gave her a longing look, wishing that he could have had more time to tell her everything she meant to him and more. And when all seemed lost, Sean stepped in front of the adepts and summoned a mighty gale that caught the serpent and sent it spinning away from the ship. A second gale seemingly much larger than the first then caught the serpent yet this time flinging it directly at Poseidon. The ice particles and the gale hit the spirit guardian square on the chest and sent Poseidon to his back roaring in pain. Felix, Jenna, and Isaac looked at the purple-haired warrior in amazement only to be met with a quizzical shrug.

"You're an adept?" Isaac asked dumbfounded.

"Just a recent development I assure you," Sean answered dryly.

Another roar sounded and Poseidon was again at full height.

"THIS ENDS NOW!" he cried as he charged at the ship with his trident lowered.

"He's going to rip the ship to shreds with that thing!" Jenna screamed.

"Everyone attack!" Isaac ordered. Spires, lightning, and flame barraged Poseidon unmercifully but he kept on charging. Bruised and charred flesh covered their assailant's

chest but the crazed spirit did not falter. Poseidon edged closer and closer until the snarl on his lip could be seen clearly by the four adepts. Felix readied his sword along with Isaac closely followed by the massive Ouranos and the mysterious Sean. They were prepared to meet Poseidon head on if he got close enough. Unless they killed him now, he would hang around to insure the deaths of all the passengers after he inevitably collided with the vessel.

"Steady," Isaac said trying to contain his fear. "He's almost in jumping distance...ready..."

An instant before Isaac could give the order to meet certain death, a dragonhead appeared out of nowhere and collided furiously with Poseidon's side knocking him well away from the ship. Massive wings revealed themselves to the adepts and to all of their surprise; the *Wind Chaser* reeled around the ship and headed majestically toward Poseidon. Before Poseidon could regain his composure from the *Wind Chaser's* ram, hundreds and hundreds of ice shards materialized from the deck of the ship all hitting home all over Poseidon's body. The spirit roared in pain and confusion as he stole one horrified glance at the new enemy while blood flowed freely down his chest. Standing side by side on the deck of the *Wind Chaser* stood almost a dozen Lemurians all ready to let loose another volley. Among the twelve Lemurians stood one man in the middle brandishing a mighty trident, *the* Trident of which instilled fear in all of the beings of the ocean. Horror, fear and anger struck him like a hammer and in agony, Poseidon let out one last roar of disdain. He then turned his back on the people that had betrayed him, the people that had once been his own, the people that he loved dearly. He retreated below the surface and sank in despair. The blue-haired man would pay. Vengeance was all he truly had now. Felix would pay. And by vengeance would it keep him.

***Chapter 8*: Gareth**

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Chapter VIII

- Gareth-

The sun rested heavily upon the crimson horizon as a lone traveler emerged from the rugged passes of the Kimbobo Mountains. As the traveler descended from the final slopes of his journey, the last of the sun's rays beat upon his face before relinquishing into a cool caress of darkness. Why he had accepted this mission in the first place, he didn't know. All he had to do was settle some intertribal boundary issues between three tribes. Diplomacy had been the priority, but with the way things were happening, force would be absolutely necessary in order for further investigation to take place. Besides, this was the way he preferred it. Exchanged words and promises meant nothing when they could be broken so easily, but put a sword to a man's neck and their words become their salvation, or their doom. Without the threat of immediate consequence, men were nothing but a petty face of liars.

And for the second time since his arrival in Southern Gondowan, Gareth approached the fire-lit village of Pavakobo. Warriors patrolled the outer limits in a stealth-like fury, almost completely invisible within the shroud of the night. Within the walls he heard many men marching and shouting in unison.

If they wouldn't let him in to see the chieftain, it seemed that it would be very difficult to force his way in. The challenge thrilled him, but at the same time he wondered if

he'd make it out of this one alive. At this point though, he didn't care.

Naturally, it all started with a girl.

So many years had passed since Gareth had been out in the world with the drive of purpose. Granted, he had been entitled adept guardian along with the rest of his friends, but his duties in a fairly peaceable land made him feel close to useless. In time, Gareth decided to take up the family trade as a farmer.

It was in the fields that his memories of his past disappeared just like the life after a winter frost. With each passing year, his concerns grew narrower and narrower in scope for the livelihood of a farmer entailed him few burdens. And so his gallant lust for life escaped him, or maybe just lay dormant while the surrogate existence of field labor consumed him.

But some things always remain in a man, and sometimes all that it takes to resurface these things is a simple tug at your heart by the imploring hand of a woman. Thankfully for Gareth, this woman did come and he was saved.

Gareth's first love was for Jenna, and his heart remained hers ever since the day he set eyes on her as a child. But never being an artist, or a poet for that matter, he never could find the right way to express how he felt. All he knew was swordplay, and through that he channeled his passion. Everyone knew that few could rival him. Despite his dazzling displays of strength and will against his opponents, his physical silence was all Jenna knew and therefore never made her the wiser of Gareth's feelings. This silence doomed him until one day the heavens fell. His love was extinguished in one blow when Isaac asked him if he would

be his best man. He accepted of course, but he was never the same again.

Sometimes on days when all the work was done, he would lay down on the grass and allow his mind to wander to the depths of his soul where of which he rarely dared to go. He would think of himself as a flower that had basked in the radiance of the sun for all his life. Jenna had been his morning and his day, and just to see her face once, would lift him from the worst of despair. But his sun one morning did not rise. His life seemingly enveloped in shadows for the force of love that had once fueled his passion for living and fighting, ended with two simple "I dos". He was left in darkness, alone, no purpose, and no beauty to win over. A man can slowly be destroyed by the stagnation of such longings, and for Gareth, he was on the very fringes of such a fate.

But as with every base passion, it clings to your heart until the very last, preserving and hoping that the object of your longing will return for you to love once more. His sun had forever set, he knew this, but he prayed that some light would reveal itself in the void of this endless night.

Gareth was in the fields when Isaac's two sons came to tell him that their parents needed him for something.

"Is this important?" Gareth asked them.

"Very," they both had answered.

"Somehow I'm not convinced."

"Father said you'd probably say that," Adrian giggled. "So, he told us to tell you that it's guardian business."

Garet had raised an eyebrow both physically and mentally. The words, no, the concept aroused a curiosity that he had not felt in ages.

"I guess I have no choice then, do I?"

"Yeah, pretty much," Michael retorted.

"Where should I meet them?"

""Our house," Adrian said and with that the boys took off running.

Garet informed his younger brother Aaron that he was running a quick errand and would not be back until sundown.

"Must be something big," Aaron told him. "I haven't seen you plan on being gone that long unless you were going out to buy seeds."

"Maybe I am going to buy seeds."

"Doubt it," Aaron replied knowingly. "But whatever you're doing, I'll hold up the fort until things are taken care of."

Garet looked at his brother and realized what a man he had become. When times grew hard and he would have to leave with the other adept guardians, he was confident that his family would be in good hands.

"I know you will, Aaron. I know."

The trip to Isaac's house was short so it didn't result in too much anticipation to be built up for Garet. He reached the small two-story cottage and knocked on the door. The door opened, it was Jenna.

"Hey Gareth, she said ushering him in with her usual mesmerizing smile. "Thanks for being here so quickly."

"No problem, what's going on?"

"Come in and hear for yourself," she said leading him into the living room where three people were sitting quietly. Felix, Isaac, and a woman he did not recognize all looked at him inquisitively. The other woman was wearing a white traveling robe that fell just below her knees. Covering her neck and back she wore a beautifully embroidered poncho that boasted a white even brighter than the rest of her dress.

"This is Kamarabi. She's from Kimbobo. Kamarabi, this is Gareth, he's the other adept guardian we were talking about earlier."

"Hello, the woman said giving him a forced smile, then quickly turning away. She was young, in her early twenties most likely but her complexion gave her the look of a middle-aged woman. Her eyes, a lush dark brown painted with the trials of her life laid hidden beneath an evident cloak of sadness. Other than this, beneath her flowing midnight hair, she was stunningly beautiful.

"Hi," Gareth greeted in return, trying to catch her gaze again. Isaac smirked as he watched Gareth's fleeting glances.

"Gareth, we have a situation at hand," Isaac said as his best friend ceased his gaze at Kamarabi, turning to him.

"Kamarabi has traveled all the way from her village in Southern Gondowan to ask for our help."

"Alone?" Gareth exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, alone," the woman piped in with a tribal accent he had failed to notice before.

"Do you want to take it from here?" Felix asked her.

"Yes, thank you sir."

"Please, you can call me Felix."

"Yes, mista Felix sir."

He looked at her unsure of what to say next. after a few seconds of silence, Kamarabi flashed him a big smile.

"I am just joking with you," she said still smirking. "I may be from a village where we hunt down unaware passersby for recreation, but we all know that there is a time to laugh."

Felix, after another few seconds of comprehension, joined in the laughter already resonating throughout the rest of the room.

"Anyway," Kamarabi began after the chuckling died down, "I have traveled many days across land and sea to ask for your help."

The adepts said nothing and waited patiently for Kamarabi to continue.

"In recent years, a new village called Pavakobo has been constructed between both Kimbobo and Naribwe. Nobody knows who founded it, but the village has already picked up to become very large and very militant. Pavakobo is even beginning to infringe on the hunting grounds already established for the other two villages. If this open aggression is not stopped, I fear that all three participants will be cast into a terrible war."

"So what do you need us to do?" Isaac asked.

"I am but a mere woman," she replied instantly. "I can do nothing to stop a conflict of men. But if one of you could reason with the authority in Pavakobo, we might have a chance to spare countless innocent lives."

"She speaks the truth," Felix stated. "I remember from our travels across Weyard that Kimbobo and a few other indigenous tribes in that area were all strictly patriarchal. I assume Pavakobo will be the same."

"Well Felix," Isaac said deciding on what course of action was to be taken, "you seem to be familiar with the circumstances, and only one adept would really be necessary."

"I would love to go," Felix said quickly.

"Wait a second."

All eyes turned to Garet.

"I don't think Felix going would be a good idea."

"And why not? Felix asked in indignation.

"Because Picard told me the story of what happened when you all came to Kimbobo for the first time."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"He also told me all about what happened inside the statue. About how you managed to take the book Akafubu was seeking."

"The Tomegathericon!" Jenna said in realization. "I remember that! Akafubu was furious!"

"But he didn't know Felix took it," Gareth added. "He was just told that he wasn't ready to have access to the power the book held. I'm pretty sure Akafubu has tried to retrieve the book since then and I'm willing to bet that he's probably pretty mad that the book has already been taken. And, he knows that only one other person could of possibly taken it."

Garet looked at Felix. "You."

Felix seemed unfazed and immediately fired a counterattack to Gareth's unusual logic.

"I would not be entering into negotiations with Kimbobo, I would be talking to whoever is in charge in Pavakobo."

This time Isaac answered him. "You can't enter into successful negotiations about boundary issues unless all the concerning parties are present. Akafubu was coronated village witch doctor so he would have to be included."

"And that could make your job as a mediator very difficult," Jenna concluded.

Felix hated the fact that a mission deep in the heart of Gondowan was slowly slipping a way from him. But the facts were clear and his presence would be sure to doom the mission.

"What do you think?" Jenna asked Kamarabi who had been smiling ever since the argument between Gareth and Felix had broken out.

"Garet is right," she said quickly. "He said everything I was just about to tell you."

"So he is mad?" Felix asked.

"Yes, he is."

"Then what do we do now, "Felix exclaimed in frustration, just hating how events were progressing.

"Well," Isaac began, " Jenna and I shouldn't have to leave the kids unless we have to. So I guess that leaves Gareth. You up for it buddy?"

Garet looked at Isaac and thought about everything he would be leaving behind. He would only be leaving the last ten years of his life, but then again, he would also be returning to the first years he had loved so dearly.

Something was stirring in his gut. With each passing second, he felt it taking a firmer hold on him. He couldn't help but start smiling.

"Yeah," he said trying to suppress his steadily growing enthusiasm. "I'll do it."

And so Gareth and Kamarabi departed the next morning.

"You know, right, that every time I say your name I feel like I'm reciting the entire alphabet," Gareth said to her one day while heading down the long road to the Gondowan mountains. "Don't you have a nickname or something? You know, something like Kama, or maybe Rabi."

She laughed, shaking her head furiously. "No, no, please do not call me one of those! If anything call me Mara. My father calls me that back home."

"Mara sounds good to me," Gareth decided. "Speaking of fathers, what's yours like?"

Garet immediately realized that he had hit a nerve as Mara's face turned somber. He wanted to kick himself for ever bringing it up. Thankfully, however, she continued.

"Lately," she said taking a deep breath, "he has not been himself. He just...I don't know if..."

"You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to," Garet interrupted her, pleased to see an obvious sigh of relief emanating from her. So, she didn't.

Their journey was mainly in silence, but when Garet did get Mara to talk, she talked. The topics mainly encompassed the joys of traveling, hardships, and occasionally her objects of amusement. She enjoyed many simple things, some ranging from the funny looks children gave her when she talked in a foreign city, to the way the rain falls on a sunny day. She was truly an extraordinary woman.

The only problem Garet noticed was that every time the two would share a laugh while exchanging glances, she would always be the first to turn away. He hated this and it nagged at him the entire journey. What did it mean? He was beginning to dare to be attracted to Mara, but every time she turned away from him he felt that he would just be wasting his time. But one day as the Gondwan Mountains flooded into view, Garet realized that time was probably running out for him to get to know Mara any further before the aspects of the mission would completely enthrall him. Besides, silence had lost him Jenna already, and regret was really getting old. So he decided to make his move.

"So Mara," he started with an utterly obvious acting tone. "Is there a Mr. Kamarabi waiting for you back at the village?"

Mara gave him one of those mischievous smiles that can make any man go mad. "If there was," she said still smirking,

"he would be with us right now. No husband of mind would be sitting at home doing nothing while a war lingers not far off."

Okay, success, Gareth thought, but now what?

"Why do you ask, Gareth?"

Damn, I just set myself up!

"Oh, I don't know," he said fumbling with what to say next. She was looking directly into his eyes now, and she was not turning away. Her expression was emotionless and he was starting to lose his cool as he returned the gaze. Now he wanted desperately for her to turn away. He felt as if his mind was being probed for the answer to his question. She wasn't using psynergy to mind read him, for he knew that sensation, but somehow she was reading him; every twitch, every movement, and every flicker of the eye rendering him more and more transparent.

Not now, he reluctantly decided. He hardly knew this woman. Heck, she hardly knew him.

"Okay then," Mara muttered responding to his silence, yet again seemingly piercing his thoughts.

Another great many of days passed before the two even reached the base of the mountains. They were monstrous and never had Gareth felt so small.

"This should be interesting," Gareth remarked as he imagined the difficulty ahead of them in traversing the mountain paths.

Mara looked at him curiously. "We are not going through the mountains, silly, that would be suicide. When I said I

traveled across land and sea, I was not joking."

"You have a boat?" Gareth asked thoroughly surprised.

"Kind of."

"But that's impossible, there isn't a harbor for leagues! Especially anywhere near the Gondwan Mountains."

"Follow," was all Mara said in reply as she headed westward.

A few days later they reached the Great Western Sea. Gareth looked in dismay as they came into view of Mara's ship. A ship indeed. He stared at it. A canoe.

"Welcome to Kamarabi Harbor!" Mara exclaimed, obviously mocking his disappointment. Gareth fired back.

"Did you think of that name all by yourself?"

"Yes I did if you must know, but be quiet!" she hissed as he pointed a little ways past her canoe. Three additional canoes floated in silence beneath some ill-placed branches.

"Were about to be ambushed," Mara said in an unusual playful tone. "Do not be alarmed though, we are dealing with amateurs. Just keep walking and we will see who we are dealing with momentarily."

Sure enough, six men of all shapes and sizes revealed themselves from their hiding places and surrounded the two. They all chuckled wildly while clumsily brandishing their swords.

"We don't have time for this," Gareth muttered as he lifted his palm in preparation to channel his psynergy into fire.

"No!" Mara shouted. "Do not use your power, that's no fun!"

Garet looked at her not sure if he was hearing her correctly.

"What?"

"You heard me, they are amateurs. We have no need to kill them. If we disarm them by besting them in combat, they will run."

"How do you know?" Garet asked still not fully recovered from the shock of this new side of Mara's personality.

Mara looked at him as if he was the most ignorant man in all of Weyard. "First of all, they did not have the guts, or the skill, to sneak up behind us on the road. Second, they made sure that when they wanted to ambush us, they had their boats nearby. They are cowards Garet, so let's have some fun!"

Once again she flashed him the smile, and then dropped her white poncho off her shoulders. Reaching behind her back, she unsheathed two long scimitars. Their attackers halted their advance, but pressed further seconds later. Mara then twirled her weapons effortlessly in a flurry of intimidation and grace.

Garet looked at her in awe and could not help but burst into a wide grin. He then pulled out his massive sword, ready to fight by her side. There was no denying it anymore. He was in love.

***Chapter 9*: A Step in the Right Direction**

Reviews:

Skarecrow- Yeah, I thought I got all of them, but I recently changed all the Piers's to Picard. Guess I missed one. The Stone of the Sages thing surprised me too when it didn't appear. Maybe the story will explain that more later....Muhahaaa....Thanks for reviewing bud!

Cerise- Though sometimes I like to consider myself a genius, I know I'm giving way more credit to myself than I deserve. Glad you are liking the story so far and many thanks for taking the time to review.

Master of Reality- And of course my faithful reviewer who prevented me from posting in utter embarrassment with zero reviews. A couple of words from you was all it took to make this author happy. My thanks is beyond words. And now just for you, here's Isaac and co.

Disclaimer: Don't own Golden Sun or any of the characters.

Chapter IX

- A Step in the Right Direction -

The *Wind Chaser* circled around the water to where Poseidon had retreated until the crew were sure that the danger was gone. The *Chaser* then hovered to the side of the Tolbi-bound vessel, extending a plank to connect the two ships. Picard then walked across clutching the mighty Trident by his side. In his wake, four strong-looking Lemurian men closely followed.

"Troubled seas already?" Picard asked sarcastically after approaching the adepts.

"Indeed," Felix replied, playing along with a face of unmistakable seriousness. "Though if we didn't have an acquaintance who so pleadingly begged to take the Trident home with him, we wouldn't be in this mess."

"A weapon of such craftsmanship should never be in the hands of a Venus adept. They would simply poke their eyes out."

"And a Mercury adept could do better?"

"A trident is a weapon of finesse and as we all know, Venus adepts are not known for such prowess. But in the hands of an artist, the trident can quickly and decisively pierce the heart of your enemy before they can pierce yours. Essentially, I have done you a favor by allowing the Trident to work its beauty through an able catalyst."

The two stared at each other without a word but could not hold straight faces any longer.

"Picard!" Felix said, arms wide open. "Good to see you again you old scalawag!"

"Same to you old friend!" Picard laughed as they both gave a quick embrace.

"So what in the world are you doing here?"

"Saving your life if I recall correctly."

"But how did you know where to find us?"

Before Picard could answer him, Jenna and Isaac approached the two to greet their Lemurian companion.

"Hey you," Jenna said smiling, wrapping her arms around his neck. "You didn't stay long last time you came to see us. You going to this time?"

"Well it seems that I may have no choice since you all have gone and made a nemesis out of a spirit."

"As I understand," Isaac commented, "Poseidon was de-spiritized, wasn't he?"

Picard grinned and extended his hand to him. "De-immortalized yes, but a spirit just the same," he said as they both shook hands. "And since we're on the subject of greetings, who are your friends?"

Isaac looked at Sean and Ouranos to of whom Picard was referring to. "A fellow adept and his companion," he replied. "Sean here kept us alive until you came along."

Sean looked unfazed by the compliment but nodded his head in acknowledgement. Picard could of only imagined what had transpired before he arrived, so he decided to take Isaac's word for it.

"You have my thanks, Sean, for sometimes my friends don't realize the extent of the danger they put themselves in."

"It was nothing," Sean replied. "Besides, that monster was not just attacking all of you, but the ship as well. I plan on winning Colosso this year and I don't plan on anything getting in my way."

"You have my thanks just the same," Picard said as Sean and Ouranos retreated below deck.

Felix watched the two leave with a slowly developing contempt, but averted his gaze in full knowledge that despite Sean's ego, he had saved all their lives.

"So tell us, how did you know where to find us?" Felix repeated to Picard.

"I was told."

"What?" Jenna asked in surprise.

"Yes, I was told by someone."

"Who?" Felix questioned sharing the bewilderment of his sister. Right when he asked this however, the four Lemurians that had accompanied Picard of the *Wind Chaser* stepped aside to reveal a sixth party. Felix looked at the girl before him as his heart skipped a beat. She was not a girl at all, but in actuality a young woman whose features startled him. Her hair had grown well past her shoulders since the last time he saw her. The eyes however, retaining the blue wonder he was always used to seemed undeniably melancholy. Felid hadn't seen her since Isaac and Jenna's wedding twelve years ago. She had grown from an awkward young girl into something exotic, as if her beauty wasn't of this world. This meeting was inevitable, but he expected it to happen in Lalivero. Sheba had once again caught him off guard...

It had been two months since Sheba had been taken from her family in Lalivero. Saturos and Menardi now held her captive after they had secretly stolen her from her prior captor, Lord Babi.

The party rested in silence as the Venus Lighthouse towered high above them. The two fire adepts eventually retreated into their separate tents leaving Sheba and Felix by themselves.

"You're different from them, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am."

"But you still follow them! Look, they are asleep and if we were quick about it, we can escape! You don't have to stay Felix, let's go!"

Felix chuckled. "As a prisoner, you are in no position to try and make your captor escape with you. Second of all, I would rather die than let you flee. This is why Saturos and Menardi sleep so soundly tonight, for they know this."

"But why?" Sheba asked desperately. "Why do you follow their destructive paths?"

"I do not follow anyone. I simply just have the same goals as they do."

"And what are their goals? To pillage, kidnap and plunder?"

"Girl, you do not understand."

"All I understand is that you are in the wrong crowd, and for what reasons I intend to find out."

"What are you going to do, mind read me?"

"Maybe I will."

"If you can free yourself from those shackles and can get close enough to do so, please, be my guest."

Sheba scowled at him and struggled hopelessly to try and move from where she was. She let out a scream of frustration as she fell hard to her side. Unable to put herself upright, she stopped trying as tears silently rolled down her cheek. The moon was full and its shimmer transformed her

tears into sparkling sapphires. Without a sound, Sheba turned her head away from him so that he wouldn't see her crying. Felix sighed, for he had caught a glimpse of her shimmer, and reluctantly decided to walk over to her. He stood above the girl and looked behind him at Saturos and Menardi's tents. Kneeling down, he pulled a key from his cloak and unlocked the shackles binding Sheba's hands and feet. Two tear-stained eyes looked sorrowfully into his.

"What are you doing?" she asked, her voice broken and soft.

"You won't run," Felix replied, ignoring her question.

"Only because you have intrigued me into knowing why you're taking these off me."

Felix grinned. "Then I guess that's that. I'm going to sleep."

Sheba wiped the tears from her eyes and crawled to where Felix was lying down. She sat down next to his head and looked at him.

"Why are you really here?"

Felix opened his weary eyes and gazed upon the heavens reminiscently. He didn't know why he was about to talk with this girl, but for some reason, it felt so right; him a prisoner of the duty he had sworn himself to, and her a prisoner bound by shackles. Regardless of for whatever reason, he spoke anyway.

"Have you ever felt that the world was just too massive for one person to really make a difference in?" he began. "Just too massive to let your fate be controlled by your own will alone and not by the cosmic pull of everything else?"

"I'm a female, fourteen-year old prisoner," Sheba smirked. "I think it's safe to say that I'm feeling pretty helpless right now."

"Then you know the feeling?" Felix asked, cracking the smallest of smiles.

"Yes, I do."

"Then imagine the feeling of being freed from that marginal existence, enabling you to be more than fate originally intended for you to be. Imagine the feeling you would have, if you could change the world."

"It sounds amazing, Felix."

"Yes, and believe it or not, you play a role to that.

"I play an important part to your feeling?" Sheba said looking at him expectantly.

Felix hesitated. "Yes, in a way. Because with you here, I can trust more than a blind hope."

"I don't follow," she told him, utterly confused.

He sighed as he averted his gaze from the sky and turned to the girl beside him. The warmth she gave off was intoxicating.

"As you shouldn't," Felix said to her. "I can not tell you the details of our quest, for Saturos and Menardi wish it and I would never betray them. All I can tell you is that two worlds are at stake here, mine, and ours. But as long as you are with us though, we can save them both."

"You're speaking in riddles, Felix. What world of yours are you talking about?"

"I'm sorry, Sheba, I can say nothing more."

With that, Felix turned his back to her and closed his eyes. Sheba scooted closer to him and laid down behind him, breathing softly on his neck.

"You will have to go back to your shackles," Felix whispered. "There will be trouble for the both of us if you don't"

Sheba ignored him. Instead of answering him, she got up and crawled to the side Felix's head was facing. Laying down directly in front of him, she gazed into his eyes.

"Didn't you say that if I got close enough, you would let me read your mind?" Sheba commented tenderly.

"I lied," Felix replied, his heart racing.

"Fine then, I won't. But I still need to know something."

"You know what I can and can not tell you."

"No, it's something else that words have nothing to do with. If you'd let me, I'd like to do a different kind of mind read on you. A mind read that would let me feel what you feel rather than me seeing your thoughts. The mind isn't just a place for facts, you know, but also the place where we begin to understand our hearts. You see, as long as I am a prisoner, I have no choice but to accompany you on this journey. But if I was to understand the passion you hold in this quest, I could gauge your character well enough to allow me to want to follow you willingly, even without these bonds or Saturos and Menardi. To be honest, I have no real reason to return to Lalivero. Faran isn't my father, and the rest of his family isn't

mine. I have been longing to leave forever, and this might be the pursuit I want to join. But no matter how much I want to be part of something outside my old life, I will not follow a madman's quest. You have to let me Felix, please."

"I don't like the thought of you seeing all of my emotions."

"Oh, don't worry," Sheba assured him. "I would only experience the ones that encompass this quest. If I start to feel something other than that, you would know immediately and could break the link at your digression. Please, Felix. I really want to follow you, and this is the only way I can truly know who you are."

Felix knew that what Sheba wanted to know wasn't too much to ask. He thought of the great armies of the past and the great generals that led them. The soldiers had the right to know the passions guiding their commanders. Passion in an essence was all that humans had. Felix could not deny Sheba to understand his.

So he nodded as a smile formed on Sheba's lips. She told him to lift his head so she could place both her hands on each of his temples. He complied and then rested his head on her hand. Her palm was cool to the touch and her breathing was slow and steady across his face. She closed her eyes.

Felix felt her enter his mind. The intoxication he had felt when Sheba was close to him seemed to increase ten-fold as she swam freely in the sanctuary of his emotions. He felt her examining the feeling he had felt when Saturos and Menardi had saved him from the storm waters of Vale; examining the loyalty that he held for them, and the pain of leaving all his friends and his younger sister. He watched as

the faceless characters transferred to Sheba, the emotions resonating instead.

The shock of seeing Gaia Rift for the first time came next, as feelings of dread and hopelessness flooded into his mind all over again; the thoughts of the world crumbling all around him leaving him dispirited and unnerved. The he felt the sense of duty when he discovered what had to be done to save Weyard. The task would be long and the prospect of it was dreary, but it also led to the feeling he was trying to describe to Sheba moments earlier; the realization that he could change the course of the world, the feeling of life's infinite possibilities flung wide open to you.

"I feel it now," Sheba whispered, instinctively moving closer to Felix's face.

A scourge of anger then surged through him as Sheba received the emotions he had felt when Saturos and Menardi threatened to imprison his parents and Kyle if this mission was not successful. He watched his thoughts turn to the horrible deeds done by his companions, the slaughter of so many innocents all because they had gotten in their way at the wrong place, at the wrong time. But he also felt the justification for their actions. Their town was at the brink of destruction and all that they knew and loved was at stake. He had long since understood this sympathy. Sheba soon did too.

Their connection was unmistakable now. The transfer of feelings was becoming faster and more pronounced the longer the link was held. Felix for a second opened his eyes to see Sheba's face inches away from his. He closed them again as another surge of passion touched his mind. He remembered seeing his sister for the first time in three years in the Sol Sanctum. Behind his mask unknown to her,

he remembered thinking how pretty she had become, and the joy he felt at the sight of her face. Never had he felt so happy, and never had he loved someone so dearly then at that moment. Sheba felt this radiating love and could not help but shiver, only to be warmed by the close proximity of their bodies. Everything she had just experienced with him was echoing madly inside her soul and mind as she involuntarily edged even closer to him. He wasn't a madman, she knew this for sure. His drive, his will and his constitution all helped her understand what Felix was living and fighting for. The love he had let her feel was so genuine and resolute.

Felix opened his eyes to find Sheba's lips on his. Startled, he almost tore away from her, but the ambience of the moment couldn't of felt more right to him. So instead, he surrendered and soaked in the kiss.

He had found himself caught off guard only to realize that what he had been protecting was better off unguarded, and unshrouded to the forces beyond his control. For the wonders of passion can never be controlled by the will of man, just as the sensations can never be fathomed until so wonderfully experienced.

But then Saturos stirred within his tent.

The two broke away from each other instinctively. Without another word, Felix turned away from her as Sheba returned to her bonds. They caught a glimpse of each other one last time before they feel asleep beneath the fading midnight moon.

And there she was.

"Sheba?" Jenna gasped in surprise.

"Hello, Jenna," she answered ethereally, her tone sounding unusually distant. "Isaac, Felix. It's so good to see all of you again."

"Sheba was the one that told me that you were in danger," Picard informed the adepts. "She even hired her own crew and a ship so she could reach me in Lemuria."

"But how did she know in the first place?" Felix inquired.

Isaac gave him an odd glance. "She's right in front of you, ask her yourself."

Their eyes met. Sheba ignored Felix's unmannerly reference to her in third person, and began speaking before he could mutter an apology.

"A vision, That's all it was."

"A vision?" Felix echoed curiously. "Since when did you start having visions? I know that future sight is a trait associated with Jupiter adepts, but during all the time we traveled together, you never once had one."

"Well, in twelve years it's easy to miss something," Sheba stated impassively.

Felix's heart lurched at the tone of her words. They weren't angry, but they had no joy either. They were just simply, lifeless.

"Now if you would excuse me," Sheba said starting to head back to the *Wind Chaser*. The voyage has made me very tired and I wish to rest a bit. I will see you when we reach Tolbi."

With that, she walked slowly as she boarded the vessel and disappeared beneath the deck. The adepts looked at each other bewildered at the state of their old friend. Then they turned to Picard who wore a face that suggested he had no idea what had happened either.

"What was that about?" Jenna asked as she uneasily watched Sheba board the *Chaser*.

"She was like this when she contacted me in Lemuria," Picard replied sullenly. "I wish I could tell you."

Felix was uneasy about Sheba as well, but he knew that the situation would clear up with time now that he would be accompanying them. For right now, they really needed to move on.

"Sheba mentioned Tolbi?" he said breaking the gloomy aura floating above the party. "We have the *Wind Chaser* now, so why don't we just head to Lemuria on that."

"We shouldn't leave the passengers alone after what just happened," Isaac refuted.

Picard nodded his head in agreement. "Indeed, and also I would like to visit Tolbi myself."

"What for?" Jenna asked him.

"To broaden my horizons per say. Just recently I mastered teleportation and..."

"Thank Sol!" Isaac interrupted raising his fist in the air. The journey ahead of them had just been cut dramatically by Picard's few words. Isaac let out one large and obvious sigh of relief as he looked at his companions who were all staring

at him with smirks on their faces. "That's a good thing guys, come on! Why are you looking at me like that?"

"No reason," Jenna replied with a devious sparkle in her eyes. "It's been a long day, and well, it just seems that the day's events have dealt serious blows to your self-control. Maybe you should take a nap, or something."

Isaac smiled. He had just been given what was coming to him since they left New Vale.

"Come here you," he said laughing, reaching for Jenna's waist as he pulled her to his lips. Jenna giggled as she pretended to try and punch him away.

"Yeah, so anyway, what about this teleportation?" Felix asked Picard.

"Well," he explained throwing smiling glances at his two friends, "in order for me to teleport somewhere, I have to of already been at the destination. Tolbi is probably one of the most important non-adept cities in all of Weyard so it would most likely be a good idea for me to have full access to it for whenever the need arises."

"Good thinking," Felix said.

"Yeah," Isaac agreed between a kiss. "Excellent ide..."

"Then I guess I will see you at Tolbi docks my friend," Picard said extending his hand to Felix, grinning madly at the two.

"Yes, until then."

Tolbi docks was never as busy as you would think it would be, considering the large population concentrated nearby. The Karagol Sea was once Tolbi's main food source even, that is until a mountain exploded hurling several purple unidentified flying objects into the sea; this in turn causing all the marine life to go crazy, unbeknownst to the general populace of course. Only a few brave fishermen dared to fish in its waters now, leaving them and the Kalay Ferry Service the only owners of ships. The once bustling harbor now laid mostly empty, harboring little but moss and barnacles.

Both ships made dock and extended their respective boarding ramps to the ground. Picard and Sheba walked off the *Chaser* and waved behind them to the Lemurians on board. The ship then pulled in the ramp and hovered back to the Karagol.

"Whoa whoa, wait a second!" Felix shouted at the ship which was already well out of earshot. "Picard, where are they going?"

"We're teleporting, Felix. Remember?" Sheba said letting off the smallest of smiles at his pathetic facial expression.

"I can take multiple people as long as they are all touching," Picard said refraining from laughing at his expression as well. "Yes, of course," Felix said in a gruff voice. "Yeah, that makes sense." Everybody laughed.

The party approached the town to exactly how some of them remembered it. People everywhere, shops around every corner, men hard at work training for Colosso, and of course standing out above the rest, the gorgeously elaborate palace of the late Lord Babi.

"Wow!" Adrian said staring in disbelief at all that he saw before him. Never before in his life had he seen such

architecture. He quickly made a mental note to include this in the Venus Parchment, that is, whenever he got around to it.

"That's the palace I was held prisoner in for a while," Sheba told Adrian while crossing one of the many busy streets. After becoming acquainted at the docks, the two had been deep in conversation ever since.

"And then you were taken again by Saturos and Menardi?" Adrian recalled from an earlier story. "That's bad luck Sheba. Who gets kidnapped twice?"

"I have no idea," she shrugged. "But it all worked out in the end."

After walking the many twists and turns of the town's streets, the party eventually arrived at Tolbi fountain indicating that they were in town square.

"Well," Picard said, "I guess this is as good as a place as any. Form a circle and take each other's hands so we can teleport to Lemuria."

But before Isaac could take Jenna and Felix's outstretched hands, a structure he did not recognize caught his eye. The building was gargantuan, and almost rivaled the size of the Colosso Arena. Why he hadn't seen it before, he didn't know. The foundation and walls were circular, and shielding the interior from the elements was a giant dome.

"What is that?" Isaac said completely amazed with the design

The others looked at the building in similar awe, but turned back to Isaac pleading him to join hands. Right when he was about to comply, someone behind answered.

"That is the future, my friend."

The adepts turned around to see the face of none other than Iodem, mayor of all Tolbi, and lead founder for the construction of New Vale. Words were beyond them, but the party managed to utter a few greetings. He was graying, but other than his hair and his beard, he still looked fit enough to be a soldier.

"You haven't aged a bit!" Isaac said after overcoming the shock of conversing with one of the most important men in modern Weyard. "You don't have any of Babi's Lemurian draught stashed away somewhere do you?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't," Iodem said laughing heartily. "That would be a tragic spin to his death though, wouldn't it?"

"I'll say. So what were talking about earlier, about the future?"

Iodem smiled as if he thought he would never ask. "Walk with me Isaac. Your friends can join us too for they are just as much apart of this as you are."

The Venus adept turned his head to his friends who all gave him noncommittal shrugs.

"Lemuria isn't going anywhere," Picard reasoned. "We have no immediate reason not to go with him."

The others nodded their heads in agreement as they joined Isaac and the enthusiastic mayor.

"Excellent," Iodem exclaimed flashing a very diplomatic smile. "Follow me."

Isaac couldn't believe how big this building actually was. They had been walking for half an hour in plain view of their destination but somehow the path became longer and longer. The structure was situated well on the outskirts of town, most likely because of its sheer size. Whatever the case, the walk was long and they were already tired from navigating the busy streets of the main town. But as they pressed further, evidences of an entrance came into view. Isaac's mouth dropped open.

The entire structure was lined with vaulted atriums, one level after another of white, marble, vaulted atriums! They were even positioned in a circle! Isaac couldn't imagine how the building held together, especially with that massive dome on the roof.

"Iodem!" he whispered in awe. "This is brilliant!"

The mayor smiled widely at his creation. "It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Hall of Order."

The adepts let the name sink in with the wonder laying right before their very eyes. Not one of them could deny that this was a masterpiece.

"Can we go inside?" Felix asked now taking a keen interest in the structure.

"We're still under construction," Iodem replied. "But I think I have enough clearance to get us in for a quick peek!"

Chuckles erupted from the adepts as they followed him through the entrance.

For the second time since they met up with Iodem, words were beyond their grasp. thousands of seats laced each level in a pyramid like fashion, all surrounding the inner floor

which consisted of a circular stage, and several two-men desks circling around it. Above the stage, a large hole could be seen in the dome that allowed light to shine down on the speaker. The Hall of Order was even more impressive inside than out.

"What do you think?" Iodem asked.

"It's beautiful," Jenna answered without a second thought. "I've never seen anything like it before."

Felix turned to Sheba who was looking very uneasy. "What's wrong?" he whispered to her.

"Nothing."

"My question is what is it for?" Isaac asked, thoroughly intrigued by the craftsmanship, but completely confused with what purpose the building could hold.

"Ah, I thought you'd never ask," Iodem replied. He gazed fondly at the room and then returned his attention to his audience.

"Many years ago, a kingdom once thrived. All of Weyard was ruled under one banner, and no other banner existed to oppose them. The great king that united our world was said to have been the wisest, and shrewdest man ever to take the throne. His people loved him and supported his conquest into its completion. The day he died, however, anarchy enveloped. The people held no loyalty to his heir, so in turn they were uncontrollable. An uncontested rebellion arose, and in two-month's time, the monarchy was overthrown. Luckily for Weyard, the leader of the rebellion was a wise young revolutionary. He proposed the mayor system for all of cities involved to maintain order with the absence of a central government. The system was a success, and is still

widely used today. Moral of the story, a government can not last if it belongs to a supported select few. So that's why I am in the process of introducing a new concept to our world, a government that belongs to the people exclusively. If everyone's voice is heard, they will naturally develop a personal tie to their ability to govern and can keep their wits about them when a new leader arises. How will this happen you ask? Well, the people will be the ones deciding who leads them, by a voting system. All the government processes will be screened through this system, and any one who wishes to participate is welcome too. The Hall of Order was constructed for this sole purpose, to provide the means of gathering all these people to make this *democracy* work."

"Democracy?" Picard said raising an eyebrow. "This is the system my kin use in Lemuria."

"Your Senate has been the inspiration of this entire project," Iodem stated. "I had heard rumors of common sailors finding the lost city. So I decided to send some myself. The reports of your advanced government were incredible."

"Our democracy only works because of the people that compose the Senate," Picard retorted quickly. "They are the oldest, and wisest of us all. And lastly, and most importantly, we have a small population. Because of our small size, the elders can appropriately provide in the best interests of all the people. You wish to provide for all the people of Weyard? That's impossible Iodem, humans are not natural creatures of politics. They are too selfish for that, and their desires are too scattered to be looking in the best interests of their fellow men."

"Maybe, sir Lemurian, but I will not give up my pursuit based on the frivolity of the human nature. We must learn to conquer ourselves, and this democracy will help us do this."

The two started at each other on edge.

"But I did not invite you here to discuss politics," Iodem said breaking his stare from Picard. "It is again my pleasure to inform you that mayors from all around Weyard are coming here, for the first ever convention to plan how we are going to make this government work. The convention will be held after Colosso this month so more people will have a chance to witness this historic event. You all are personally invited, and I hope to see every one of you there. Now, I am afraid I must get back to work, so this is where I take my leave. Feel free to explore the Hall of Order as much as you'd like."

Before Iodem could turn away, Felix caught his gaze with an eager look. "Uh, sir?"

"Yes Felix, what is it."

"Are mayors from the adept cities coming?"

"Yes, of course. Four months ago I sent emissaries carrying formal invitations to all the cities. Prox, Contigo, New Vale, and even Lemuria. Oddly enough though, none of the emissaries have returned. But I'm sure they will in time. Any other questions Felix?"

"No that's all."

"Then I bid you all farewell."

The adepts waved the mayor off, and turned to each other amazed at what they had just heard.

"Can you believe this?" Isaac asked his friends. "This a huge step in the right direction for our world."

"Maybe it is," Picard agreed. "Maybe it isn't."

"What do you think Sheba?" Jenna asked her friend who had been silent ever since they had entered the Hall.

"I am worried that something happened to those emissaries."

"Yes," Felix said nodding his head. "That worries me too. Four months is more than enough time to reach those destinations, including the return journey."

"We should probably look into that Isaac," Jenna said to her husband.

"We'll see what we can do," he replied. "A lot can happen to a non-adept in four months. I have a feeling we're not going to find much if something did happen to them, but we'll try."

They looked at the Hall of Order one last time. In one month, history was definitely going to be made here. Not one of the adepts could deny this. Picard just hoped that Iodem was right, and that people could overcome their nature by democratic means.

"In light of where we are," he said shifting his thoughts from politics to their own ordeal, "I think now would be an appropriate time for us to leave."

"Finally," Adrian piped in, who was on the verge of dozing off. Politics definitely wasn't his thing. The party laughed as they approached the lighted stage in the center of the Hall of Order. Standing around the small platform, sunlight dancing in between them, they joined hands.

"To world peace," Jenna said a little too excitedly.

Felix and Isaac snickered.

And then they were gone.

***Chapter 10*: An Audience with the King**

Reviews:

Cerise- To answer your question about Picard and Conservato, I say simply this. Politicians talk. And in Conservato's case, he was just trying to intimidate Picard by trying to throw around his power. Hydros of course would of never let Conservato banish Picard. Spoils of a king! Thanks for reviewing.

Master of Reality- Yeah, that scene was pretty fun for me to write. At first I was a little uneasy about writing a scene like this with an an eighteen year old boy making out with a fourteen year old girl, but then I realized stuff like this wasn't as shunned upon in medieval times. Which Golden Sun basically is, so I kept it. As usual, thanks a ton for readin' and reviewin', and you're doing an excellent job with the novelisation!

Gilly-Glad you like it! So here's some more.

Disclaimer: I think I've said this quite enough, so I assume I'm safe from the lawyers....for now.

Chapter X

- An Audience with the King -

The waves rolled gently against the hull of the Lemuria-bound vessel as the beam from Babi Lighthouse shone brightly through to the land beyond the mists. Two ships followed the luminance, one in silent pursuit of the other, the pursued ship in question completely unaware.

"Make it obvious Briggs," a voice whispered with a crisp and placid tone. "Make sure you don't sink the ship, but make the signs of attack *obvious*."

"Do you want us to leave the bodies on board?" the pirate asked with a grin.

The man instead returned him a menacing frown. "If you had heeded my last words you wouldn't of asked that question."

"I'm sorry sir," Briggs apologized. "But I promise you that by the time my men get through with that ship, it will be so stripped and damaged that anyone who passes by will have no choice but to shudder."

"You fool!" the man said suddenly raising his voice in frustration. "If you plunder the ship it will look like the work of common pirates! You will leave the valuables intact, battle damage only!"

The two stared at each other and after Briggs nodded his head in submission, the man disappeared out of sight.

"You're growing soft," a lean boy of fifteen remarked to the pirate king.

"Bah, he has us by the throat," Briggs replied in disgust. "But, we will do everything he wishes until he gives us those cannons, and after we have them, no one ever again will tell a Champa what to do. Are you ready, son?"

"I'm more than ready," the boy answered while looking at the strange light glowing a couple leagues south of Babi Lighthouse. "I don't know what it is about this place, maybe something in the air, but for some reason I feel stronger here."

"Don't let your confidence in being the predator of a defenseless prey interfere," Briggs urged to his son. "Just use your two attacks and destroy the rows."

"Got it."

"Full sail and all hands to the row deck!" Briggs shouted as the boy ran to the front of the ship. Eoleo began to clear his mind so that his psynergy could flow freely and unhindered by the weights of his other thoughts. A commotion could be heard brewing across the water for apparently the other ship had been alarmed by his father's shouts. Just as planned, the ship that was currently being led by an eastern wind, immediately sent some rowers to help put some distance between them and their pursuers. Little did they know, however, was that this move would seal their fate. If only they knew that no matter how hard they tried, they could never outrun a Champa flagship. Maybe if they knew, they could of focused on defending the ship instead of scattering the men in a hopeless effort for agility. No matter what they could of done, tactics couldn't save them now. They were all going to be killed.

The rows of the fleeing ship moved frantically in unison. Eoleo quickly memorized the timing of when the oars entered and resurfaced from the water. His psynergy only allowed him to make two spires before he would become completely fatigued, so, he waited patiently for the opportune time to make his assault.

With a splash, the oars crashed against the ocean as the wood submerged heavily beneath the surface. Gasping for air, they quickly reappeared from their watery encasement only to have their breath swiftly taken away by the sudden impact of an earthen spire colliding violently against them. One by one, the oars snapped as the rock plowed

unmercifully through them. The port oars completely reduced to shreds, the second spire made quick work of the starboard side.

Eoleo watched in satisfaction as a drop of anxious sweat trailed down his brow. With his palms still extended toward his target, a tingle vibrated at his fingertips.

That's odd, he thought to himself. He usually only felt that tingle when he was about to use psynergy. Never had he felt it directly after, fully exhausted. He had exhausted himself, hadn't he? His body was telling him no, for usually when he had launched both the spires, his legs would almost always buckle beneath him in weakness; yet this time, he was standing steadily without an ounce of fatigue. A smile erupted on Eoleo's lips as he looked excitedly upon his hands. With a malicious smile, he slowly looked up at the damaged ship before him. The sail still provided his prey considerable speed, of course not enough to escape his father, but still enough to make this hunt longer than it needed to be. With his eyes locked on the mast, he thrust his palms forward once again. To his surprise, two additional spires much larger than the previous ones materialized from his hands, both throbbing and brimming with a psynergetic glow. Eyes wide open in delight, Eoleo launched the spires powerfully at the mast, and with a loud snap, the sail plummeted destructively to the deck below.

Briggs and his men boarded the now inanimate vessel. The crew resisted, but a group of common sailors and a diplomat were no match for a battle-hardened mob of pirates.

Eoleo's blissful smile slowly faded as the screams of the crew members echoed over the water. He had learned to ignore these screams over the course of an entire lifetime looting with his father, but never had he felt such remorse, and such

resounding shame. It was because of him that the crew had no chance to survive and no chance to even fight. *But that was the way of the pirate*, he said in his head over and over again. To gain whatever dirty advantage you could possibly take.

It just seemed, however, that he was becoming that sole dirty advantage more and more. The same filth that continued to defile a world trying so hard to be pure. The fact that he was beginning to enjoy it sickened him even more. To make matters even more depressing, he didn't even feel tired from his amazing new feat of psynergy. It seemed that his body, or his mind rather, was starting to get used to playing a part in ending people's lives. And he was getting stronger while doing it.

"There must be something in the air," he muttered as he sadly walked to his cabin, the strange light beside Babi Lighthouse shining magnificently on the horizon behind him.

Never again, Felix vowed to himself as struggled to maintain his balance on the soft grass beneath him. His head was throbbing madly as he pictured all the pieces of his brain organizing incorrectly into oblivion. Looking to the others, he noticed similar expressions of discomfort, most notably Adrian who looked like he was about to hurl.

"You alright there?" Felix asked the disorientated boy.

Adrian nodded as a rumbling sound came from his stomach suggesting otherwise.

Picard looked to the boy with a smirk. "Big lunch by any chance? Sometimes the reformation process has a little

difficulty reforming foreign objects in your body. So with a full stomach, the food tends to pop up all over the digestive tract, from all places of the digestive tract."

In addition to the graphic illustration Picard has just mentioned, along with his stomach churning

from who knows what being inserted there, Adrian found no difficulty in letting loose. Felix backed away from the boy as things that never should of came out of a person's mouth dropped to the ground.

"That's really disgusting," Felix said to Picard. "You could of said something before we teleported you know. We could of bought him a doggy bag before we left town."

"Speaking of leaving town," Isaac interrupted as he put a consoling hand on his son's shoulder, "I really don't know why we came here. I guess we have a lot of catching up to do."

"Indeed."

As the party walked slowly through the grassy fields surrounding the main city of Lemuria, Isaac spent the entire stroll explaining their motivations for journeying to Picard's homeland. He told the Lemurian about Sheba's prediction about the newborn adept effect, his travels to Suhalla confirming her prediction, their prospect travels to Imil and Contigo to consult Mia and Ivan about the phenomenon, their detour to Lemuria in hopes of Picard mastering teleportation, and finally their bringing along Adrian to see the healers there.

"And you say every single child in Suhalla under six years of age, is a Venus adept?" Picard asked amazed.

"Yep," Isaac replied in a comparatively dryer tone. "The same effect happened for the youth of Lalivero a year earlier. Every child under seven now is an adept as well."

"How could this be happening?"

"We figure it has something to do with the lighthouse," Jenna answered. "The psynergetic light emitting from the aerie must be in some way manifesting its energy into the people within its sphere of influence, causing all newborn children to be elementally gifted."

"And the sphere of influence seems to be growing rapidly," Felix added. "We left New Vale to discover whether or not the same effect is happening in Contigo and Imil."

Picard turned his head to him as a stroke of realization popped up in his mind. "I believe I have the knowledge you seek in Imil."

"Can you see into the future as well?" Sheba asked him with a sarcastic smirk.

"I'm afraid not, but I did visit Mia not to long ago."

"And?" Isaac inquired insistently.

"I remember distinctly that she told me that the save few newborn children in her village all possessed Mercury abilities. Because so few children are ever born in that town, she thought it nothing more than a coincidence, as did I."

"One down, one more to go then," Isaac remarked as he turned to his wife who also looked relieved as well.

"Yes," Felix said sharing similar relief. "All that's left is Contigo, and I know Picard has been there before, so, we can

teleport. We will be finishing this quest in record time."

"Hopefully, but we probably should of just headed to Contigo directly from Tolbi," Isaac told the party. "We do have our good teleporting friend now, so we probably could of hit Lemuria after all the investigating was done. Now that I think about it, we probably should just head to Contigo right now."

"The Healers will need much time in examining your son," Picard countered. "We will ultimately save time if we drop him off at the Sanctum while we investigate Contigo in the meanwhile."

Isaac and Jenna looked at each other nervously, but both nodded their heads in eventual agreement. Adrian would be safe here. There was no need to worry.

"Is that alright with you?" Jenna asked her son who was already looking disappointed.

"I guess," he replied sullenly. "I kind of wanted to see Naomi, but I won't mind only if Picard can take me to Contigo at least once before we head back home."

The couple turned to Picard who was smiling at the boy. "You drive a hard bargain, young sir, one of which I have no choice but to concede to."

"Fine by us," Isaac consented as the party approached the first signs of a road leading into the mystical city of Lemuria. The scene before them was much the same to their previous recollections of their last visit. Isaac had visited Lemuria shortly after the lighting of the four beacons, as he never had a chance to see the city in his quest with Mia, Garet, and Ivan. The buildings all retained their ethereal design and structure, stone and marble walls lined with the

occasional colorful tapestry. As the adepts walked the main streets, they took notice of a few shops that did not exist before. Stands adorned with exotic pottery, plants, and jewelry instantly caught their curiosity.

"Those don't look Lemurian-crafted," Felix said pointing to some crude pottery decorated lavishly with many colors and designs.

"They aren't," Picard replied quickly. "They came straight from the Apojii Islands. Of recent years we've had quite a few merchant ships try to make their way to our city. Babi Lighthouse helped them hold their course through the currents and mists, but seldom few ships were able to navigate the Sea of Time. The products you see here are the results of the effort and bravery exhibited by those merchants who did make it here."

"Are there any merchants here now? Jenna asked as she looked longingly on a pair of emerald earrings.

Before Picard could answer, a group of Lemurians passed the party all directing glances of pure disgust toward them. Whispering among themselves, they walked away raising their hands in the air right when they were out of earshot of the adepts.

"All the merchants were asked to leave for the festival tonight," Picard answered ignoring the rudeness of his people. "It is a sacred tradition that no one besides those native of this land should attend. This is why those Lemurians weren't to thrilled about your arrival."

"What's so great about this festival that no one besides you guys can participate?" Felix inquired.

"The Festival of the Heavens is much more than a recreational event your kin are used to outside Lemuria. But instead, this festival marks a great cultural anniversary where our history is recounted and looked fondly upon. None but ourselves are permitted to hear it, for the knowledge belongs to us and us alone."

"So does that mean we are intruding then?" Jenna asked semi-occupied with examining the jewelry in the palm of her hand.

"Of course not," Picard replied. "You are all much more than merchant outsiders."

"Yet that is ultimately for King Hydros to decide."

The adepts all turned around to the new feminine voice sounding behind them. A young woman, whose blue silky hair fell down well past her shoulders stood before them wearing an expression of the utmost professional manner. Her composure seemed almost regal, as she stood erect and yet seemingly relaxed. She was about Jenna's size, her figure even sharing the slender, yet not fragile build Jenna had. The eyes were what struck the party most, for they boasted the shining Lemurian blue that complimented her hair while being highlighted by her pale face. Upon her body she wore the typical white gown found commonly on the women of the city, and on her arms and neck various exotic jewelry adorned her.

"And you are...?" Isaac asked confusedly.

"A messenger," the woman replied with a low and mature voice. "A messenger who brings the tidings of a king. You are to be summoned in the palace throne room immediately."

And with that, the woman began to walk away.

"Bree, wait!" Picard shouted to her. Bree turned around and looked at the Lemurian with an odd smile. Picard then approached the woman and leaned in to whisper something in her ear. With a nod, Bree again turned and went about her way.

"Okay," Felix said casually. "We just got here didn't we?"

"So how were we already noticed enough to be summoned by the king!" Jenna said finishing her brother's thought.

"Questions, questions, all these questions," Picard remarked jokingly. "As with all things, they will come to pass. The answers will come all in due time. But in the mean while, I will take Adrian to the Healers for it is you adepts of whom the King wishes to speak with."

"I'll go with you," Sheba said quickly walking to stand by Picard.

"Don't you want to hear what he has to say?" Felix asked looking at Sheba intently.

Sheba shook her head slowly. "I already know what he wants to say. Please don't ask."

Felix looked at her with eyes full of wonder and confusion. She had changed so much that he could barely put a finger on who she had become now.

"Alright then," Felix whispered. "Isaac, you ready?"

"Yes sir. Let's go see what King Hydros wants."

As the party walked through the city to the palace entrance, the structure was glowing more fantastically than ever. The stone composing the walls seemingly glittered as if pure silver, the banners of these walls flowing downward in a crimson cloak of majesty. Approaching the front doors, two Lemurian guards wielding large axes receded their weapons to allow the adepts to pass. Felix having more experience in the palace than his sister and Isaac, led the way across the decorative halls leading into the throne room. The doors were already open when they got there, so when the three were close enough to the entrance way, they immediately caught a glimpse of their summoner. The old King was conversing with a young woman and as the adepts drew closer they noticed that she was none other than Bree the messenger who had called for them in the first place. Both Lemurians hearing the footsteps of visitors, Bree retreated into a hallway while the King stood slowly to full height.

"Greetings adepts of Weyard," Hydros exclaimed almost dismally. "I prayed that I would never of had to seen any of you again. But, life is very long and I could never have hoped to outlive the conflict of this age. From your encounter with Poseidon I fear it has begun."

"Please excuse my bluntness, but we hardly consider a skirmish with an old enemy the conflict of the age," Felix said defiantly.

The King gave a slight smile that ceased as quickly as it had appeared. He then began to pace the room pensively.

"What do you know about the man known as Alex?" he finally asked the adepts catching all of them completely off guard.

"Almost nothing," Isaac replied not expecting such a question. "The only information or knowledge about his intent in our quest thirteen years ago was revealed by the Wise One atop Mars lighthouse. He wanted the golden sun."

This time the King's grin was unmistakable and did not fade right away.

"It amuses me to hear that misconception still being circulated among those who it direly concerns. A proper education is of great need here, but first, I will test your folly with what it true. Now please, tell me what Alex wanted with your...golden sun."

"Infinite power, everlasting life, you know, same old same old," Jenna answered casually.

"And did he get it?"

The adepts looked at each other. They had all assumed he had.

"It is safest to assume he did," Felix answered.

"Safest? How so?"

"We can only expect the worst from him, so by expecting the worst of circumstances, we can never be fully caught of guard."

Hydros fell silent and walked heavily toward his throne to sit down. His eyes that held so much authority all in an instant shifted into two fading stars that had long since been weary of all that they had seen.

"You could not begin to fathom the worst of circumstances," Hydros sighed. "But at the same time, do not be so quick to

judge a man."

"Maybe you were not told," Isaac said, "but a year ago when we had dared to believe Alex was dead, or at least gone, Felix found himself at sword point by the fiend himself right in front of his own cabin."

"If me and Isaac hadn't planned on visiting him that night," Jenna added, "there would have been now way Felix could have fought him off."

King Hydros raised an eyebrow. "You fought him off?" You fought the beholder of the golden sun off, you say?"

Isaac was slowly but surely starting to get annoyed with Hydros 's mocking of their "folly".

"I do not know the exact power given by the golden sun, but I assume Alex does. All I know is that once Jenna, Felix and I had the upper hand in battle, he fled. Because of this, it is only logical that despite Alex's immortality, he is not invincible regardless of the power he gained at Mt. Aleph."

"You mean to say that in all of Alex's infinite power you still managed to repulse him?"

In spite of the fact that Hydros was being annoyingly persistent with proving his point, the adepts were beginning to wonder themselves how they were able to repel Alex if he had truly attained the power fear professed him to have.

"The facts are simply this," Hydros sighed. "Alex wants something but it's not any of your lives he's primarily after. He would have not put Felix at sword point unless he wanted the upper hand in bargaining. And unless you find out what he wants to bargain for, your efforts against him are

misguided at best, and if victory were to come, it would gain us all nothing."

How could Hydros be so sure that Alex's main intent is something other than pure malice, Isaac thought to himself? However, it did make sense that they needed to find out what Alex was seeking. For one, it would be easier to track Alex down if they knew what he wanted, and second if they did find him and still managed to kill him without knowing his intentions, a great danger could be at large with no one knowing but a dead man.

"How can we find out what he wants?" Isaac finally asked.

"As I said before, an education is order here."

"Well," Felix said impatiently, "let's hear it." When it finally seemed that they were going to get some answers, the doors to the throne room burst open. A fat and elaborately robed man entered walking briskly toward King Hydros.

"Your Highness," the man squealed almost in indignation. "The Senate will be meeting in mere moments and you must attend, as planned."

"Peace Conservato," Hydros said raising a hand. "I was just heading out."

"What?" Jenna exclaimed in surprise. "But you were just getting to the part where you were going to let us know what is going on!"

"Ah yes, I was wasn't I."

"Your Excellency!" Conservato screamed again. "This is an issue of the defense of the entire State! We must go now!"

The adepts gave the King a quizzical look and then to Conservato who seemed intent on not looking at them.

"Unfortunately my friends," Hydros said standing up from his throne," this is a matter that will require my presence in order for the proceedings to run smoothly."

Conservato gave a very satisfying and distinct grunt.

"But, the good news is that you will hear everything you need to know if you choose to attend the festival this evening,"

"That's preposterous!" the fat man said angrily while his face scrunched up to form several wrinkles. "Visitors are not allowed to attend the Festival of the Heavens! Even you can not deny that this rule plays part into some of our most sacred traditions that were practiced for very good reasons."

"Times have changed, Conservato and now we have an even better reason to allow them to attend. It is by their knowledge and awareness alone that can bring triumph to the third age. The least we can do is offer our wisdom to guide their endeavors."

"The third age?" Felix questioned incredulously.

"I am needed in the Senate," Hydros said ignoring Felix's question. "But I expect to see all of you at dusk for the opening ceremony. Please take no heed with my roundabout explanations in our few moments together, for all will be clear before the sun's first light tomorrow morning. Excuse me, I take my leave."

And with that the King and Conservato walked out of the throne room already talking furiously over what they were about to discuss in the Senate.

"I guess that's that," Isaac said giving Felix a mutual glance of annoyance. "Looks like we might as well burn sometime in Contigo before tonight."

"Right," Felix agreed. "Let's go find Picard."